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NOVEMBER 1, 1999

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**PHILIP A. KLINKNER
with Rogers M. Smith**

PHILIP A. KLINKNER
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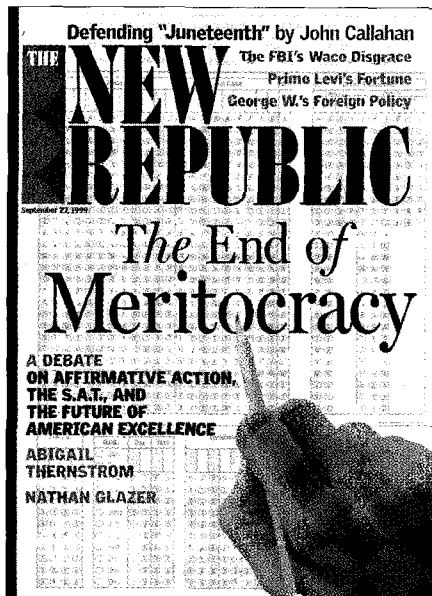
"[Klinkner and Smith argue that] whether we shall overcome depends on the national will to realize classic American ideals. The authors' rigorous, exhortatory exposition promises to unsettle some readers, but, in the end, it stands with important works such as Jennifer L. Hochschild's *Facing Up to the American Dream*. It calls on Americans to confront the persistent black-white divide and the disparity between democratic promise and practice."—*Library Journal*

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Striving

TO THE EDITORS:

The current debate over whether SAT scoring should factor in the test-taker's race and socioeconomic background ("The End Of Meritocracy," by Nathan Glazer and Abigail Thernstrom, September 27) will benefit from new work by Claude M. Steele and his colleagues at Stanford University. Published this August in *The Atlantic Monthly* ("Thin Ice: 'Stereotype Threat' and Black College Students"), Steele's report on his groundbreaking research regarding the effect of "stereotype threat" on black college students represents an important development in how the higher education community, as well as society, should look at race in college admissions.

If I read Steele's work correctly, the score gap between black and white students on such tests as the SAT may to a significant degree result from the fact that society has long sent black students the message that they will underperform on standardized tests. This negative stereotype deals a double blow to many black test-takers: They are hit hard with the expectation that they will underperform and then hit again with the debilitating anxiety that their underperformance will confirm negative stereotypes about black students' abilities.

Thus, whether such tests as the SAT are inherently biased is no longer the only question. The question now becomes whether these tests are so freighted with negative expectations and meanings for black students as to hamper those students' ability to excel. If this is the case, then the fairness of standardized tests becomes even more questionable.

The work of Steele and his colleagues demonstrates that the road to equal opportunity for many students of color is longer and more complex than we quick-fix-oriented Americans would like to think. The argument that merit should be the sole determinant in college admission is flawed insofar as the mechanisms to determine merit are flawed. If we as a society want to become truly fair, egalitarian, and merit-based, we must, at least as a first step, ensure that our measurements of merit are fair. And, if adding a "Strivers" score component to the SAT will make it a fairer test, then such an option is worthy of consideration.

JOANNE CREIGHTON

President

*Mount Holyoke College
South Hadley, Massachusetts*

TO THE EDITORS:

As I read the debate between Nathan Glazer and Abigail Thernstrom about the new SAT "Strivers" scores, which are designed to suggest that a black or Hispanic high school student who scores 1200, for instance, on the SAT must have worked harder than a white or Asian student who receives the same score, I felt that something was wrong. Then I realized what it was.

I am the father of two boys; one is 21, the other 17. The first is attending an excellent liberal arts college; his brother hopes to gain admittance to a top-notch school as well. For the past 15 years or so, I have helped them fill up their time with a wide variety of activities, including organized sports, music lessons, acting in amateur and professional productions, etc.—not to mention endless homework. (Both of them, by the way, have received only public schooling.)

I am not suggesting that my sons are unusual; as any middle- to upper-middle-class parent of teenagers today—white, black, Hispanic, or Asian—can tell you, they are *typical*. I am not in the least slighting the achievements of disadvantaged youngsters, but the implied premise of the Strivers concept—that white and Asian kids are sailing through life in a comfortable bed of privilege, effortlessly securing the benefits for which minority kids have to work—is absolutely ridiculous, an insult that today's teenagers do not deserve. I'm sure some minority inner-city students work just as hard as the kids who live in my small New England town; I simply do not believe that a significant number of them work *harder*, because I have seen well-to-do kids like my own drive themselves to exhaustion

night after night and on some weekends. My main worry about the kids I know is that we are turning them into workaholics even before they reach adulthood. And the many well-off white and Asian kids who do not fill their time with schoolwork and activities are at a tremendous disadvantage in the college hunt and usually wind up at local state university campuses.

It has been noted that white sports commentators often imply that black athletes succeed because of talent while white athletes succeed because of hard work. The ETS seems to be promoting an opposite set of academic stereotypes. Both are insulting, racist, and inaccurate.

DAVID KAISER
Jamestown, Rhode Island

TO THE EDITORS:

One thing I never see mentioned in the debates about college admissions decisions is that virtually every college in America gives preference to the children of alumni. I can think of nothing that is a greater affront to the traditional American concepts of fairness and advancement through individual work and merit. In addition, this policy seems much more prevalent at America's elite private universities than elsewhere. I suppose if by meritocracy one means to include attributes of breeding and class, then giving preference to the progeny of alumni is within bounds.

ROBERT PIERSON
Via the Internet

FBI file

TO THE EDITORS:

Gregg Easterbrook did a great job in his exposition of the FBI's appalling execution of the Waco siege ("Under Fire," September 27). However, he missed a crucial item: a golden chance to end the whole affair peacefully that was thrown away. One standard way to deal with hostage and siege situations is to have someone who understands the adversary take part in the negotiations. Bible scholar James D. Tabor, a professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina, was serving as an adviser to the FBI after the agency had taken over the operation. He and a colleague, using their biblical expertise, were apparently able to convince cult leader David Koresh to alter his interpretation of Revelation and to agree to surrender after writing a relevant commentary. Shortly after Koresh agreed to the deal, however, the all-out raid was conducted. Readers may be interested in an article by Tabor detailing these events, which was published in the Biblical Archaeology Society's journal *Bible Review* in October 1993.

GIDEON WEISZ
Boulder, Colorado

Textbook racism

TO THE EDITORS:

In his review of Neil Jumonville's biography of Henry Steele Commager, Alan Brinkley, with considerable understatement, refers to Commager's "relative reticence on the issue of race" and his failure to embrace the civil rights movement "with the same fervor that he brought to other issues." The review sent me back to my copy of the fourth edition of *The Growth of the American Republic*, the highly successful textbook Commager coauthored with Samuel Eliot Morrison, which was required reading when I studied American history during the mid-'50s and was still being printed and widely circulated some years later.

The authors open the section in Volume I dealing with slavery in the antebellum South with the phrase "[a]s for Sambo"—no doubt one of those "rhetorical flourishes" that, according to Brinkley, are partially responsible for the book's success—before characterizing the average slave thus: "Topsy and Tom Sawyer's devoted Jim were nearer to the average childlike, improvident, humorous, prevaricating, and superstitious Negro than the unctuous Uncle Tom." Confronting the practice of separating slave families by private sale or auction, the "feature of slavery that most outraged humane feelings," the authors remark that "it was often asserted in defense that Negroes had a very slight family attachment." A quote from Whittier's poem "Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother," which movingly protests this practice, is introduced only to be diminished as "mere abolitionist cant." The final indignity in this sorry performance is a classic defense of slavery as a "transitional" institution: "If we overlook the original sin of the slave trade, there was much to be said for slavery as a transition from a primitive to a more mature culture." In one of several efforts to achieve some "balance" in this section, the authors recognize that slaves did not only learn their masters' language, religion and "moral standards," but they also contributed much besides their labor to American civilization, "rhythm and humour for instance [*sic*]."

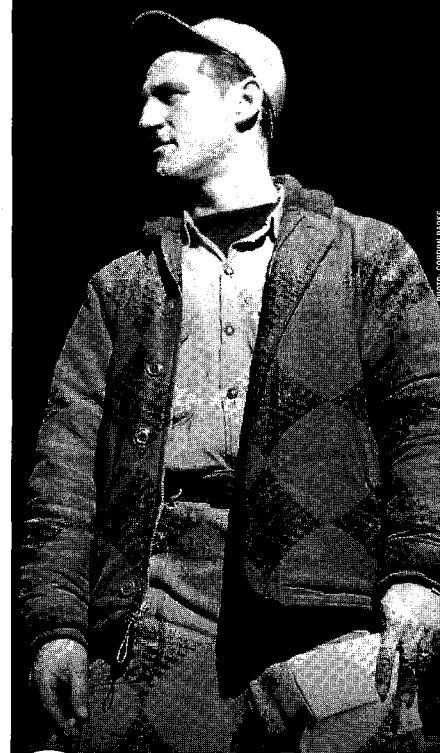
Liberalism is a movement freighted with a complex history and characterized by the frequent interplay of contradictory ideological impulses. Nevertheless, an apologist for slavery who perpetuated deeply offensive racist stereotypes into the era of the modern civil rights movement should not be accorded a place of honor at the table of liberalism. Why do both Brinkley and Jumonville prepare such a place for Commager?

HOWARD E. NEGRIN
New York, New York

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Protection Racket

FOR AS LONG as Congress has been debating whether to regulate health maintenance organizations (HMOs) by setting standards for care, establishing independent review of treatment decisions, and exposing HMOs to lawsuits, critics have tried to seize the moral high ground by predicting that such heavy regulation would drive up the cost of health insurance—and thus would increase the number of Americans who lack insurance altogether. Reasonable people can disagree on this line of argument. Certainly, the idea that there is a trade-off between cost and quality of medical care makes intuitive sense, and there's at least some evidence to suggest that effective patient-protection measures would increase costs.

But last week Republican opponents of reform blew any chance of sounding reasonable. That was when they attached a series of tax riders to the patient-protection measure that the House passed on October 7. Not only do these amendments suffer from the usual defect we've all come to expect from Republican tax provisions—namely, they shower benefits on those who need them least—but they may actually make it even more difficult for Americans to get health insurance.

Consider, first, a proposal to make health insurance tax-deductible for people who pay more than half the cost of their premiums. On its face, this proposal sounds sensible; one problem with the tax code is that it gives businesses a tax break for financing employee health care, yet it does nothing for those forced to find insurance on their own. And paying for your own insurance is extremely expensive, since insurance companies assume that, if you are buying insurance for yourself, you are, on average, less healthy than the employee of a Fortune 500 company. This is why Republican Representative James Talent, chief sponsor of the tax measures, predicted that their enactment would “mean a whole lot of people who are uninsured right now ... won't have to

face the risk of illness without the shield of insurance.”

Not exactly. According to census figures, about half of the 40 million non-elderly people who currently lack health insurance are in the lowest tax bracket—15 percent. So the deduction, to them, would be worth just 15 percent of the cost of the premium. According to a study by Iris Lav of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the deduction would reduce the out-of-pocket health care expense for a typical family making \$35,000 from \$6,700 to \$5,860—or, put another way, from 19 percent of that family's income to 17 percent. Granted, \$840 is not chump change. But it's probably not enough to make health insurance a feasible investment. Indeed, a study by the Urban Institute estimated that most low- and moderate-income families forced to buy health insurance on their own will forgo the cost—with all the attendant risks—if it comes to more than five percent of income.

Of course, there are also 18 million people—comprising 43 percent of the non-elderly population without insurance—who are so poor that they pay no income tax at all. As a result, the tax break would do zero for them. So that leaves just one group that stands to reap substantial benefits from the new tax break: Americans who fall in higher tax brackets. For them, the deduction would be worth between 31 and 40 percent of the cost of the premium. Naturally, these people don't really need the help as much. Indeed, the primary beneficiaries will likely be taxpayers in this bracket who buy their own insurance because it already makes financial sense for them to do so. Meanwhile, that's \$8 billion less per year available for other health care initiatives—for instance, the expanded children's health insurance coverage Al Gore and Bill Bradley have proposed in their presidential campaigns.

The more problematic tax provision in the HMO bill, though, is a proposed expansion of Medical Savings Accounts. MSAs essentially operate as if they were IRAs for health care. You put pre-tax money into your account and then use it to pay for basic health care. (With an MSA, you're required to hold a policy that would cover catastrophic illness.) What you don't spend you can use for nonmedical purposes, albeit with some taxes paid upon withdrawal—unless you withdraw after age 65, in which case the money is tax-free. The idea of MSAs is to encourage people to be more frugal in their health care spending. In 1996, Congress authorized a pilot MSA program. But, bowing to the concerns of Democrats who smelled a tax giveaway in the making, Congress limited the program to employees of small businesses, capped the amount of money that could be

put into them, and limited total participation to 750,000 people.

So far, MSAs haven't been too popular. In the first full year after the program's implementation, a General Accounting Office study found that just 42,000 people had availed themselves of MSAs—largely, one suspects, because the restrictions don't make the accounts particularly wise investments. But the Republican tax rider would change all of that. Not only would it end restrictions on who can purchase MSAs, but it would also allow people to sink more money into them. Together, these two changes would make MSAs a much more attractive option for wealthy people looking for tax shelters. The Republican proposal would also get rid of the 750,000-participant cap.

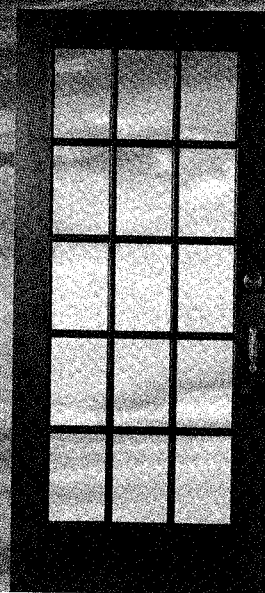
The danger here is not merely that, once again, the proposal promises to shower a windfall on those who don't need it. MSAs could also make insurance much less affordable for those least able to buy it. Remember, health insurance is essentially a big exercise in what is known as “cross-subsidy.” Premiums from relatively healthy people, who constitute the vast majority of the population, subsidize care for the sick, who constitute a very small minority of the population. In theory, people buy into this premise because anybody, even a seemingly healthy person, runs the risk of coming down with an ailment. In practice, it is possible to game the system. Young people who work and play in nonhazardous environments might figure their chances of incurring high medical costs were low; on average, they'd be guessing right. If MSAs were available to these people, they'd see them as a good investment (which they would be) and take advantage of them. By contrast, people with greater health risks (because of the conditions under which they live or work, genetic predisposition to illness, or other circumstances) would never go for MSAs, because such an account would be a bad deal for them.

So, after a while, we could end up with two groups in the insurance market: the healthy people with their MSAs and the unhealthy people with their risk-sharing insurance policies. And, without the healthy people, the premiums for the risk-sharing insurance policies would have to increase—to the point where some wouldn't be able to afford insurance at all. A House-Senate conference committee will have a chance to take this provision—and the tax breaks—out of the final bill. It should. This is a good time to be worried about the growing ranks of uninsured Americans, which means it's not a good time for passing a bill that might make the problem worse.

JONATHAN COHN

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CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

Penn's Pals

DES MOINES, IOWA

IF FUTURE HISTORIANS search for the moment when the beleaguered Gore campaign finally turned itself around, some will choose the Jefferson-Jackson dinner here on October 9, when a newly combative Al Gore upstaged Bill Bradley. Others will point to Gore's capture of the AFL-CIO's backing despite a challenge from Bradley. Still others will cite the moment when New Hampshire's governor, Jeanne Shaheen, endorsed Gore (an announcement is imminent). But a creative historian might choose another event to symbolize Gore's renewal: the moment when the cleaning crew got the upper hand in the Gore campaign men's room.

The reference, aficionados of toilet humor will recognize, is to Mark Penn, who has been dumped as Gore's top pollster. *Reason* magazine, in an article picked up in *The Washington Post's* gossip column, accused Penn and his firm of keeping their office bathroom messy. The firm denied it, and my own inspection of the premises revealed an unflushed toilet and water spilled on the counter but an otherwise tidy operation. Still, the charge had a familiar ring. The rumped Penn, nicknamed "Pigpen" by his Clinton 1996 colleagues, is known to be a bit bizarre. Penn colleagues say he misplaced an untold number of cell phones during the '96 campaign (he admits to "four or five"). Bob Squier, a longtime Gore adviser, tells of finding Penn's suit jacket and greeting him the next day while wearing it.

"How do I look?" Squier asked.

"OK," Penn responded, gruffly.

"Like this jacket?" Squier nudged.

"It's OK."

"Look familiar?"

"No."

"It's yours."

"No, it's not."

"You lost it yesterday."

"No, I didn't."

"Try it on," Squier offered.

Penn did. "Hey, my pen's in the pocket!" (Penn still denies it's his jacket.)

But Penn's idiosyncrasies didn't hurt the vice president. His advice did, Gore loyalists say. Last year, Clinton aides blamed Penn's rosy reports for the presi-

dent's failure to beat impeachment. Penn encouraged Clinton and Gore not to push campaign finance reform—though Bradley has, with much success. He persuaded Gore to enumerate a profusion of policies rather than a few big ones, something Bradley has countered well. And, they say, he downplayed the Bush and Bradley threats. On top of that, his long client list—which includes both Bill and Hillary Clinton, Gore, and Bill Gates—makes him look like a mercenary.

Now comes an October 9 *New York Times* story in which Penn washes his hands of Gore's failures. The story said that, back in April, Penn presented Gore and his aides with a memo recommending that Gore take on Bradley. Gore decided not to—an obvious mistake, in hindsight. But the Bradley recommendation was just one of several, including a call to take on Bush ("start the general now") and to roll out policies. According to others at the meeting, engaging Bradley was *not* Penn's top priority. Now, Gore and his advisers see the article as Penn's revenge for his firing. "If there were ethical standards in the polling industry, he'd be disbarred," says a Gore aide. Penn may be just another of campaign chairman Tony Coelho's scapegoats. But, even if that's true, Penn's willingness to exonerate himself in the *Times* at Gore's expense suggests his top priority isn't Gore's election.

The replacement of Penn, along with a plan to do less polling, is evidence that Gore is finally acting decisively. It's not clear whether the changes have come too late. But, at the moment, Gore seems to be back in business. Consider New Hampshire, where Bradley leads Gore. Shaheen will soon back Gore, possibly shifting the momentum in his favor. Meanwhile, the Gore campaign, aware that its lists of petty endorsements are useless, canceled an event with 100 state representatives in New Hampshire. Instead, on October 21, Gore will hold an unscripted meeting with undecided voters.

The evidence of change is all around. LEASE—EXCELLENT RATES reads a sign at 2131 K Street in Washington. In front, movers load the contents of Coelho's office onto a U-Haul truck. The move to Nashville will allow Gore 2000 to cut headquarters staff. The campaign is also toning down lavish events and sending fewer aides on Air Force Two. As Gore sheds advisers who don't move, he's picking up some new ones—including one of Clinton's early scandal managers as communications director. Even Gore war-room operator Michael Whouley, the pride of Dorchester, Massachusetts, got into the spirit of the move by wearing cowboy boots to Iowa.

Gore's shift to the heartland sometimes borders on the absurd. When reporters joined Gore's caravan in Iowa last weekend, they were given packages containing home-baked cookies, a hand-bound scrapbook with snapshots of Gore, a piece of Iowa's official state rock ("which like Al Gore is seemingly plain on the outside, but quite interesting inside"), and an ear of corn with a note from a farmer.

But, whether or not it's genuine, Gore is simulating with increasing skill the mannerisms of a normal human being. In a Des Moines neighborhood, he surprised his own advance team by leaving a press conference and marching door to door for a couple of blocks. "We've got sort of a renegade candidate here," said press secretary Kiki Moore, who worried that Gore would be bitten by a dog.

The most significant improvement is that Gore is now finally engaging Bradley. At the Iowa dinner, Bradley was cool and cerebral. But, when it was Gore's turn to speak, he bluntly demanded weekly debates. "What about it, Bill?" Gore challenged, walking in front of the podium and looking down at Bradley. "If the answer is yes, stand up." Bradley didn't budge. Gore aides had circulated posters reading STAY AND FIGHT to his supporters, whom the vice president led in a chant. "Some walked away," Gore shouted, referring to Bradley's departure from the Senate in 1996, "but I decided to stay and fight!" Even Bradley supporters cheered. The "stay and fight" idea, which will appear in TV ads, isn't a bad theme: it questions Bradley's past, addresses doubts about Gore's tenacity, and suggests continuity of Clinton policies without naming Clinton.

As Gore dueled with Bradley, the Gore campaign's vast array of minions were engaging the smaller army of Bradley staffers in a skirmish downstairs. Gore spokesman Chris Lehane confronted Bradley's communications director, Anita Dunn, who was refuting Gore's claims to a *Boston Globe* reporter. "I won't debate you," Dunn told Lehane as she retreated. "You're just like your candidate," Lehane called after her. After the speech, the Gore operation again outgunned Bradley. Moore worked on one *Times* reporter, while Whouley buttonholed another before moving on to ABC News. Lehane zeroed in on *U.S. News & World Report* and then the Associated Press. Dunn raced, without much luck, to keep up. Not that it mattered. Gore would get good reviews, for once—and even one Bradley adviser, after the spin was spun, confided the improbable truth about Gore's night: "He was terrific."

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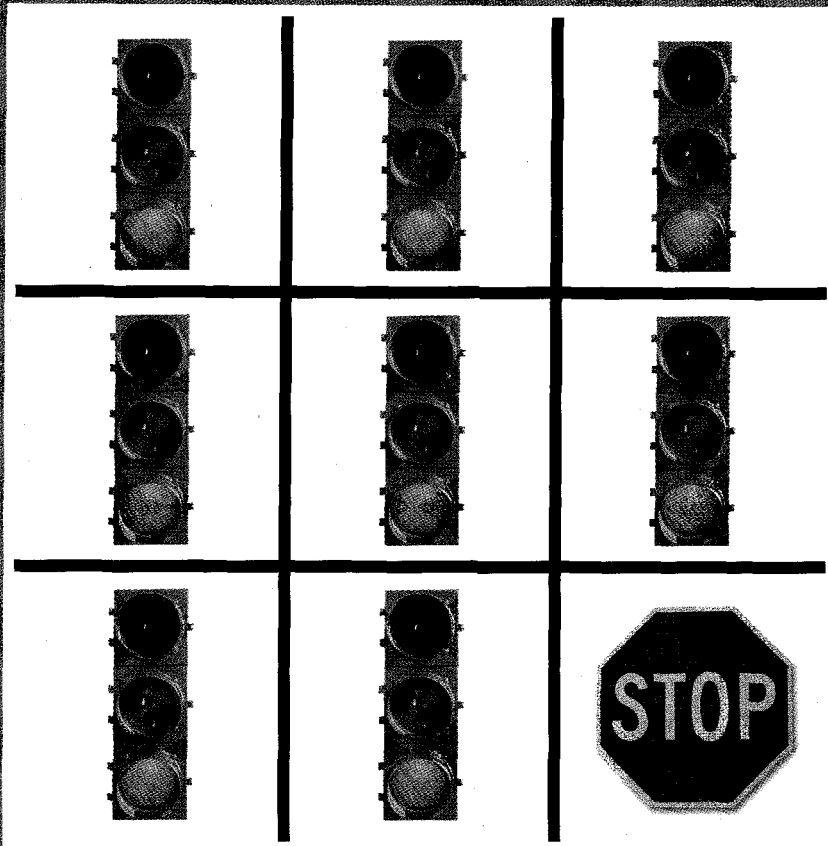
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Bill Paxton, National Chairman



Pakistan's Putsch

LET US SHED no tears for Pakistan's latest ex-prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, ousted in a military coup just last Tuesday. Elected by a landslide in February 1997, Sharif spent the next two and a half years

undermining Pakistan's already threadbare democracy. He has jailed journalists and harassed opposition members. He dismissed one president and changed the law so that subsequent presidents would no longer have the power to remove him. He forced the resignation of a chief justice who was trying him for contempt of court. He sacked then-army Chief General Jahangir Karamat for mildly criticizing him. He threw out the elected government of the southern Sindh province and installed his own cronies. And he tried to placate Pakistan's fundamentalist parties by declaring *sharia*—Islamic law—to be national law.

As Sharif focused his energies on bashing his sources of opposition, Pakistan's economy all but collapsed. Last month the International Monetary Fund was so concerned about Sharif's unsteady and corrupt stewardship that it decided to delay the next \$280 million installment of a \$1.5 billion loan to Pakistan. Meanwhile, parts of the country have descended into near-anarchy amid battles between the majority Sunni population and the minority Shiites. Forty people have died in conflicts during the last two weeks alone.

It is sadly ironic, then—and a troubling comment on the military chieftains who now supplant him—that, for all Sharif's sins, he has been ousted over one thing he did right: pulling Pakistan from the brink of a major confrontation with India over Kashmir. Last May—just months after Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had finally succeeded in opening a promising dialogue—Pakistani-backed militants and army troops seized control of key installations on the Indian side of Kashmir and began firing on India's main route into the region. Although there is some disagreement about the degree of Sharif's involvement, there is little doubt that it was the Pakistani military that was pushing this particular adventure.

By July, the border clash had claimed 1,200 lives—and had raised the prospect of further escalation between the two nuclear powers. President Clinton called Sharif to Washington and, exerting what little influence the United States still

has over Pakistan, convinced the prime minister to pull his troops out. The Pakistani army, which believes Sharif humiliated Pakistan by surrendering its hard-won gains, has been furious with Sharif ever since. This week's coup was payback.

Pakistan's new ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, does have some promising qualities. He has heretofore been an apolitical general who has spent most of his career in the field and has concerned himself mainly with professional military issues. So it is

possible that he will soon try to restore some form of civilian rule. Musharraf is also generally perceived as a moderate on domestic issues who supports economic reforms and opposes the influence of Pakistan's fundamentalist parties.

But Musharraf's stance on Pakistan's international role is another story. A former commando who was decorated for his service in a previous war with India, Musharraf was the chief architect of this May's Kashmir offensive. And that is only one of several signs that Pakistan's new leader could move his nation in a more confrontational direction. For instance, according to *The Washington Post*, in addition to their fury over Sharif's capitulation in Kashmir, Pakistan's army corps commanders were also angered by his attempts, under U.S. pressure, to distance Pakistan from the ultra-fundamentalist Taliban movement that rules Afghanistan and with which Pakistan's military has long enjoyed a close relationship. The military was also said to be irritated with Sharif's recent hints that he would not respond to missile tests by India with missile tests of his own.

None of this is good news for South Asia's stability—especially given the recent consolidation of Hindu nationalist control in India. Nor is what the coup revealed about U.S. influence in the region. Although U.S. officials insist they had no prior knowledge of the coup, they were keenly concerned about the military's grumbling against Sharif. On September 21, the Clinton administration even took the unorthodox step of warning the military against taking power. Not only did this fail to prevent the coup, but it may even have emboldened the coup plotters. So, while Sharif's ouster may not exactly be an occasion to mourn the passing of democracy in Pakistan—strong democratic institutions have never existed there—it's certainly an occasion to reflect on the failure of decades of outside support from the United States and other democracies to create lasting political development in Pakistan, much less to make the place anything but chronically ungovernable. ■

N O T E B O O K

HIGH ON THE FARM: The Freedom to Farm Act belongs on the short list of genuine legislative achievements since the GOP took over Congress in January 1995. The law sought to dismantle the archaic and inefficient network of agriculture subsidies that dates back to the New Deal, on the logic that it is both economically and morally unsound for the government to pick and choose which inefficient industries to prop up. But, alas, Congress seems intent upon subverting its own handiwork. In two of the three years since the bill passed, Congress showered billions more aid on farmers—over and above the already generous phase-out payments the new law promised. It has been a particularly grotesque spectacle this year. Both parties engaged in a bidding war and ended up throwing \$8.7 billion at farmers in the guise of emergency relief from the year's rough weather. Lest there be any sentiment that this largesse aids downtrodden yeomen of the soil, let it be noted that the average farmer has a much higher income and much more wealth than the average non-farmer—who pays for farm programs in the form of both taxes and higher food prices. The legislation before Congress raises the current ceiling on federal payments to individual farmers to a staggering \$460,000. As Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Thad Cochran put it, "This is a very generous response to the needs of farmers." Who said it wasn't?

FREE AT LAST: After an 18-month investigation, the independent counsel investigating Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has finally confirmed the obvious: Babbitt did nothing wrong. What's baffling is that Babbitt, an honorable man, had to endure two years of misery to get to this point. Ever since he was accused in 1997 of allowing political contributions to influence his decision on an Indian casino, he's had to endure investigations by Fred Thompson's committee in the Senate and, worse, by the mischievous Dan Burton's committee in the House. Neither found solid evidence of wrongdoing, but both used the opportunity to besmirch Babbitt and to tar the Clinton administration. Ironically, for the severely flawed (and now defunct) Independent Counsel Act, this was a posthumous success. The prosecutor, Carol Elder Bruce, exonerated an innocent man rather than hounding him endlessly to justify her appointment. Of course, it's a bit late for Babbitt, who has seen his dreams of a Supreme Court appointment dashed and will probably leave government, exhausted, when Clinton's term ends. Will the press give Babbitt's exoneration as much attention as it gave the charges two years ago?

DEPLETION DEPLETION: Stratospheric ozone depletion, a phenomenon mainly of the Antarctic, follows the southern seasonal cycle, peaking in October (austral spring) and subsiding in April (austral autumn). Ever since the ozone hole was first detected in the mid-'80s, media coverage has confined itself to the first half of the cycle. October reliably brings headlines that read "OZONE HOLE GETS BIGGER," while April never knows headlines that note "OZONE

HOLE GETS SMALLER." But this October the ozone hole hasn't been in the news at all. Why? The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which tracks the ozone layer from satellites, announced on October 6 that the hole was smaller this October than it was last year. Headlines might have been expected. Instead, as we went to press, a week had passed and neither *The New York Times* nor *The Washington Post* had seen fit to mention this announcement. This year's reduction in the ozone hole is statistically small and hardly means the problem has been solved. But other indicators also point toward resolution of the ozone-layer question. The principal chemicals that cause ozone depletion, CFCs, have been banned in the Western world for several years. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a U.N.-run organization of scientists, recently reported that the growth of CFCs detected in the atmosphere "has slowed to about zero." Most researchers now expect ozone-layer replenishment. It's bad enough that the major papers have ignored the NASA announcement, owing to its inconveniently positive content. Why has Vice President Al Gore, who has more of a right to claim credit for this trend than any other presidential candidate, not taken advantage of this chance to ballyhoo some good environmental news?

MARTYR MANIA: In the wake of the Columbine massacre, the media kindled to the story of young Cassie Bernall. Every news outlet from "20/20" to *The New York Times* celebrated the story of how, when Dylan Klebold, one of the killers, entered the school's library and asked Cassie if she believed in God, she courageously answered, "Yes"—whereupon Klebold shot her. Evangelicals, such as the Reverend Robert Schuller, proclaimed Bernall "a martyr in the highest and noblest sense of that word." The martyr mania peaked this fall with the publication of a book by Cassie's mother, Misty Bernall, titled *She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassie Bernall*. But, as was first reported in September by *Salon*, the online magazine, witnesses to the shooting say that the now-famous exchange may, in fact, have transpired between Klebold and Valeen Schnurr, who, although wounded, survived the ordeal. Even if the Bernall story is untrue, the tragedy of her death is not diminished. But it bears noting that the story of Bernall's martyrdom may have contributed to another tragedy. According to a September 28 article in *The Washington Times*, several of the young worshippers killed in September during Larry Gene Ashbrook's shooting rampage at a church in Fort Worth, Texas, actually asked the gunman to shoot them. "'Shoot me,' 'I'll stand for Jesus,' and 'You need Jesus Christ in your life' were some of their statements," the *Times* reported. The article—headlined "STUDENTS WHO CHALLENGED GUNMAN SOUGHT MARTYRDOM"—observed that these students "were possibly modeling themselves after the slain Cassie Bernall." If so, all those who glorified Bernall's death should be searching their souls. Her quasi-canonization may have helped some people find solace after Columbine. But what did it do for those kids in Fort Worth?

THIS JUST IN: "WOMEN WANT PAIN RELIEF DURING LABOR"—an October 12, 1999, Associated Press headline. ■

Why race matters less. Fair Philly

By FRED SIEGEL

THE WASHINGTON POST and The New York Times were stunned. Their headlines on the morning of September 15, the day after the Democratic mayoral primary in Baltimore, read, respectively, "White Man Gets Mayoral Nomination in Baltimore" and "Baltimore Democrats Pick White Councilman in Mayoral Primary." But will the headline writers be similarly shocked if, on November 2, a white man is elected mayor of the majority-black city of Philadelphia? Well, they shouldn't be, because Sam Katz, a white Republican, appears to have a real chance to defeat his African American Democratic rival, John Street, in the Philadelphia mayoral election.

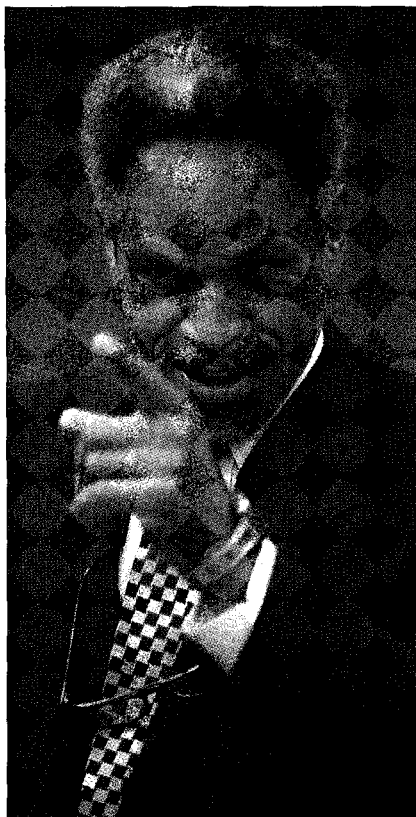
Indeed, cross-racial voting shouldn't be so surprising anymore. Not only are white candidates faring well in majority-black cities—the success of Martin O'Malley, the Baltimore "white man" left unnamed in the *Post* and *Times* headlines, follows on the heels of Jerry Brown's victory in Oakland—but black candidates are having success in majority-white cities as well. Majority-white Denver and plurality-white Dallas and Houston have all reelected or are about to reelect African American mayors. Just as encouraging is the fact that black mayors in majority-black cities are doing increasingly well with white voters: in heavily African American New Orleans, for instance, black incumbent Marc Morial was reelected in 1998 with 43 percent of the white vote, almost five times more than his earlier tally. Clearly, the dynamics of urban politics are changing—and in encouraging ways.

FRED SIEGEL, a senior fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute, is the author of *The Future Once Happened Here: New York, D.C., L.A., and the Fate of America's Big Cities*.

Even against this hopeful backdrop, though, the Philadelphia mayoral race is significant for its noticeable lack of racial rancor. To be sure, the current mayor, Edward Rendell, is a white man who has long enjoyed cross-racial support, thanks in part to his alliance with Street, the former city council president who's now running for Rendell's job. But, Rendell aside, Philadelphia hasn't had many candidates who have drawn support from both black and white voters. During the 1980s, the city suffered through some of the most racially polarized voting in the country. In the bitter 1987 election, Democrat W. Wilson Goode, Philadelphia's first black mayor, needed 98 percent of the black vote to narrowly defeat the Republican, former mayor and tough-guy cop Frank Rizzo, who got 97 percent of his support from whites.

But that sort of polarization is not likely to be repeated in this year's contest between Katz and Street. Both men, it seems, have the ability to appeal to voters of different races, as current polls show each candidate drawing 13 to 15 percent of the cross-racial vote.

What explains these numbers? In Katz's case, part of the explanation is that his Republican label is a bit of a misnomer; he is a former Democrat whose campaign is being led by Democratic stalwarts. Equally important, Katz, who once served as a campaign aide to black Democratic Representative William Gray, has good and longstanding ties to the black community. Jerome W. Mondesire, the head of the Philadelphia chapter of the NAACP, has all but endorsed him. Katz also received a tremendous boost when John White Jr., Street's rival in the Democratic primaries and the son of John White Sr.—the



The Street-Katz Fight

ASSOCIATED PRESS (2)

grand old man of black empowerment in Philadelphia—crossed party and racial lines to support him.

As for Street, he's making a concerted effort to court white voters. During his time on the city council, Street cultivated close relationships with a number of white politicians, including Rendell, and his TV and radio ads feature Rendell. Street is also taking stands on issues in ways that are likely to appeal to white voters. He has attacked Katz for supporting school vouchers—a move that should please older white liberals whose children finished public schooling long ago; on the other hand, it might not play well with black

voters, who favor vouchers by a two-to-one margin.

Both candidates' strategies reflect the realization that they have to appeal to Philadelphia's swing voters—the upper-middle-class blacks and white liberals who, along with gays, now cast the deciding votes in numerous cities, from New York to Chicago to Los Angeles. Similarly, both candidates seem to recognize that playing the race card—as O'Malley's African American rivals in the Baltimore Democratic primary did—is now an electoral dead end. Consider Street's and Katz's positions on crime (the issue, not coincidentally, was the cornerstone of O'Malley's campaign). Both Katz and Street have pledged to retain Philadelphia's current police commissioner, John Timoney. The commissioner, who has two master's degrees and loves to quote William Butler Yeats and James Joyce, was William Bratton's second in command in New York City when they made history by radically reducing the crime rate. Since coming to Philadelphia, he has begun to bring down the murder rate.

THE MAYOR WHOM both men are trying to succeed, Rendell, has had something of a split-personality in office. At times, he touts his own achievement in reviving a dying town, and Center City is certainly booming. But he can also speak despairingly of the city's declining population—150,000 people left Philadelphia during the '90s, more than any other city. The contrast between the 13 new hotels rising in Center City and the "Badlands" of North Philadelphia, only ten blocks away and probably the worst slum in America, makes it hard to look at Philadelphia through a single lens. Rendell recently told a Philadelphia audience that "the economic rationale for cities that we had ... where only a city could support manufacturing, that's gone. With mass communications, changes in technology, changes in the type of work that's done in America today, there is no rationale for cities."

Each candidate, then, appeals to a different element of Rendell's legacy. Street, who lacks Rendell's ebullient personality, is running on Rendell's policies. Like Rendell, Street favors very gradually lowering Philadelphia taxes—the highest in the nation for a big city. Anything more than a gradual lowering, though, is, according to Street, "risky" or "radical Republicanism." In a sense, Street wants to manage the city's decline.

Katz, who made his reputation not in politics but as a municipal finance whiz—as president of Public Financial Management Inc., he helped Rendell pull the city out of bankruptcy in the early '90s—has presented himself as a visionary for Philadelphia, only he takes Rendell's sources of despair and tries to turn them on their head. He points out that, while the factories are not coming back to Philly, the city's numerous top-notch universities and medical schools are the knowledge factories of the future. The problem, Katz argues—pointing to a recent study by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business—is that the city's rich crop of graduates leaves Philadelphia for New York or the West Coast. The answer, says Katz, is to radically reduce the city's tax burden so as to hang on to those in the knowledge industry—who, it is hoped, will generate new jobs and businesses.

In a city that is nearly 45 percent African American and has close to a four-to-one Democratic registration edge, Street should have a commanding lead over Katz. But Katz has strong support from gay voters, and Street's prickly personality has alienated some natural allies. Kermit Newkirk, a prominent African American minister, has supported Katz. Street's "[style is] really turning off a lot of people," Newkirk explains. "How can you support someone who won't even meet with you?" Surely, these kinds of concerns in a black-white contest suggest that Philadelphia isn't about to step back into its polarized past.

If the reporters from the *Post* and the *Times* had talked more with black voters in Baltimore (and spent less time listening to "black leaders" with a vested interest in the status quo), they would have seen what were, quite literally, the signs of an impending O'Malley victory. On the famed corner of West Fayette and Monroe Streets in all-black West Baltimore, there was but one campaign poster in the days before the election—a huge O'MALLEY FOR MAYOR sign that looked down on the intersection. There are now similar, if less literal, signs of a possible Katz victory in Philadelphia. Will national reporters notice?

But the story is bigger than just Baltimore and Philadelphia. In Oakland and Chicago, as well, a sizable number of black voters have shown a willingness to break with the failed policies of the past and vote for white candidates. At the same time, a smaller but increasing number of white voters have been willing to support black candidates. The good news that's been overlooked by the prestige press is that we've made considerable strides toward running city elections in which, to use Martin Luther King Jr.'s words, candidates are judged by the "content of their character." This isn't the solution to our urban problems, but, as Philadelphia's issue-driven campaign suggests, it's an essential first step. ■

On the Hill White Out

By BENJAMIN SOSKIS

ON OCTOBER 5, when the Senate voted along party lines to reject the nomination of Ronnie White to serve as a federal district judge, the White House instantly went into attack mode. White is the first African American judge to sit on the Missouri Supreme Court, and President Clinton declared that the vote against White "provides strong evidence for those who believe that the Senate treats minority ... judicial nominees unequally." But Clinton was too quick to slap down the race card. White's rejection wasn't the result of racism but of another potent force: the grimy imperatives of state-level electoral politics.

The campaign to deny White's appointment to the federal bench was largely the work of one man, Republican Senator

John Ashcroft of Missouri. In the weeks before the Senate vote, Ashcroft publicly branded White a "pro-criminal" judge who had an unmistakably anti-law-enforcement record and had displayed a pernicious opposition to the death penalty. Ashcroft also claimed that his office was besieged with objections to White's nomination. "I don't think I've ever seen a candidate that had the kind of opposition from law enforcement that Judge White had," Ashcroft maintained.

Yet the history of Ashcroft's opposition to White suggests that it is more a manifestation of the senator's own political self-interest than a response to a spontaneous public outcry. In May 1998, when White's nomination was first introduced before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ashcroft did cast one of the three dissenting votes. But he didn't register any formal objection to White's nomination—which would have effectively blocked it—as he had with other Clinton appointees, and it was passed on to the full Senate. As for why he opposed White, Ashcroft said he was concerned about the judge's "potential activism"; at that time, Ashcroft only mentioned the death penalty briefly, in the context of this larger concern. Indeed, when Ashcroft had an opportunity to question White during a committee hearing on May 14, 1998, he didn't ask him about the death penalty at all—only about his attitudes toward judicial activism. (White had actually affirmed his commitment to the death penalty earlier in the hearings; moreover, his record on death penalty appeals doesn't differ much from the records of the Missouri Supreme Court judges Ashcroft appointed when he was governor.)

THIS JANUARY, HOWEVER, Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan, who is running against Ashcroft in the 2000 Senate race, granted a personal request from the Pope to commute the death sentence of a notorious murderer. Soon afterward, Ashcroft began portraying Carnahan, a moderate Democrat, as a liberal dangerously soft on crime. Ashcroft also intensified his opposition to White, only now he based his opposition almost entirely on White's record on the death penalty—thereby taking an implicit swipe at Carnahan, who had appointed White.

By early August, Ashcroft had convinced his fellow Missouri senator, Republican Christopher Bond—who had once endorsed White as a judge with "the necessary qualifications and character traits"—to oppose White's nomination. On the day of the Senate vote, Ashcroft and Bond used the weekly Republican caucus meeting to speak out against White. Ashcroft also distributed letters from law enforcement agencies opposing the judge, and many Republican senators, satisfied with the evidence, felt compelled to reject a nomination that both home-state senators opposed. Said Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, who had supported White in committee, "I don't think I had a choice." When Democrats labeled the decision racist, many Republican senators claimed they didn't even know that White was black. This is probably true. They knew what Ashcroft and Bond told them, which had more to do with a supposed groundswell of grassroots opposition to White than with race.

BUT HOW GENUINE was the groundswell? Ashcroft's most impressive piece of evidence was a petition, signed by 77 of the state's 114 sheriffs, expressing opposition to White's appointment. In 1991, White was involved in a high-profile case in which a man killed three deputies and the wife of a Missouri sheriff. Voicing concerns over procedural issues, White was the lone dissenter against the decision to impose the death penalty. The petition from the Missouri sheriffs was prepared by the murdered woman's husband, Kenny Jones, who collected the signatures at a training conference for sheriffs in August. But even Jones, who never forgave White for his dissent and who would be especially sensitive to the slightest clamor against him, says he only learned of the nomination a week before the conference—some two years after it occurred—from newspaper accounts of Ashcroft's campaign against it. Jones's antipathy to White is understandable, but the timing of his involvement with the campaign undermines Ashcroft's assertion that he only acted because "the law enforcement community raise[d] a red flag." Ashcroft raised that flag himself.

Ashcroft also played an active role in drumming up the supposed grassroots opposition to White. One letter Ashcroft passed around at the caucus meeting, from the Missouri Federation of Police Chiefs (MFPC), stated that the group was "shocked ... that someone like [White] would even be nominated to such an important position." But, according to the federation's vice president, Bryan Kunze, the MFPC—a relatively small organization with only 50 active members—didn't start opposing White until August, after Ashcroft's office had sent the group information on the judge. Ashcroft also tried to recruit one of the state's largest law enforcement groups, the 465-member Missouri Police Chiefs Association (MPCA), for the anti-White cause, but he was rebuffed. "I really have a hard time seeing that [White] is against law enforcement," says MPCA President Carl Wolf. "I've always known him to be an upright, fine individual, and his voting record speaks for itself."

Ashcroft insists that his opposition to White's nomination was "not a political matter." But that hasn't stopped many Missourians from labeling it as such. The editorial pages of Missouri newspapers, including Ashcroft's hometown paper, the *Springfield News-Leader*, are already excoriating his "zealous crusade." The senator has even alienated some conservatives, including pro-life activists who wonder why Ashcroft insisted on emphasizing White's questionable anti-death-penalty record instead of highlighting his stance on abortion. "The only way I can explain it is that he was working toward his reelection campaign," says Samuel Lee, director of Campaign Life Missouri. And Gentry Trotter, a prominent black businessman, resigned from the senator's fund-raising team on October 7 to protest Ashcroft's "marathon public crucifixion" of White. "Missourians are now looking at [Ashcroft] as an extremist," Trotter says. "People like me, moderate Republicans who want someone fair and honest, are going to go with Mel Carnahan." Ronnie White won't get to be a federal judge, but he still may get poetic justice. ■

Our silly anti-dumping laws. Trade Trap

By STEVE CHAPMAN

ONLY TWO DECADES ago, American consumers and producers were continually being punished by foreign oil producers who had restricted their output in order to drive prices up to levels unseen before—or since. OPEC's reign, though terrible, was brief. Prices began falling in 1982, and until recently they were lower, in inflation-adjusted terms, than they had been at any time since the Depression. But some would like to go back to the bad old days. Currently, a group of independent American oil companies that calls itself Save Domestic Oil is pursuing a complaint that accuses producers in four countries, most conspicuously Saudi Arabia, of "dumping" petroleum—selling it at unfairly low prices—on the U.S. market.

Since the Saudis can produce oil for approximately the cost of bottling fresh air in Montana, there was something bizarre about Americans accusing them of resorting to underhanded tricks so as to outcompete high-cost domestic producers. Even considering the strange logic of our anti-dumping laws, the charge was too much to swallow. The Commerce Department, which hears anti-dumping suits, almost always sides with the home team. But, this time, it tossed out the suit—not necessarily because it thought the claim was false, but because it says a majority of U.S. oil companies have to agree before it can act, and no such majority could be found. Save Domestic Oil is appealing.

By any number of criteria, the world has made great strides toward liberating commerce. The European Union has made Western Europe one huge tariff-free area. The North American Free Trade Agreement abolished most trade barriers between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization have dismantled many of the obstacles that used to reserve domestic markets for domestic companies. But protectionism lives on in the anti-dumping laws. One American industry after another, squeezed by import competition, has gone to the Commerce Department demanding relief from foreigners who just won't play fair.

Dumping, defined as selling a product below cost or below the price charged in the exporter's home market, is portrayed as a gross breach of free-trade principles. In the usual scenario, foreigners slash prices in order to bankrupt U.S. companies, with the goal of eliminating their chief competition so that they then can jack up prices to the detriment of American consumers. Often it is said that these predators are only able to incur such short-term losses because they are shielded from competition at home or because they get lavish subsi-

dies from export-minded governments.

The punishment is harsh. Duties imposed on illegally dumped goods are set at 45 percent, on average. And American companies need not even prove violations to force importers to raise prices or stop selling their products. Foreign sellers know that the accused are unlikely to get a sympathetic hearing from the Commerce Department, which upholds some 98 percent of all dumping complaints. This year alone, the department has found dumping by steelmakers in Germany, France, South Korea, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Taiwan, Great Britain, Russia, and Brazil—which suggests that everyone is out of step but us. This is no accident. The law is written in such a way that it outlaws all sorts of normal commercial behavior. So foreign companies that engage in such behavior can expect to be keelhailed for doing things that are perfectly legal and praiseworthy when American firms conducting business at home do them.

After all, nothing in the rules of a market economy guarantees profits. Producers often sell goods below cost—think of a hardware store stuck with a big inventory of snow shovels during a balmy March or a farmer bringing corn to market amid an unforeseen glut. Some companies, including certain American automakers and airlines, have been known to operate for years while deep in the red. Amazon.com has never made a profit, and last year it lost nearly 20 cents on every dollar of revenue. But no one thinks these suppliers are doing anything sinister. Charging different prices in different markets, also forbidden by the anti-dumping laws, is not normally seen as unusual either. For any number of reasons, commodities as diverse as fruits and vegetables, secretarial services, or menswear may at times command a higher price in New York than in Fresno, California.

Last year, intense market pressures caused a surge in cheap steel imports from countries affected by the economic crises in Asia and Russia. Beset by plunging currencies and slumping demand, they were eager to sell to Americans at prices that U.S. steelmakers couldn't profitably match. When the domestic industry squawked, Washington came to its aid. But why? Though cheap steel imports inconvenience Bethlehem Steel and USX, they spell happy days for construction firms, appliance companies, or any other firm that uses steel. Steelworkers are outnumbered 40 to one by workers in industries that buy steel. What justice or economic sense is there in defending the former at the expense of the latter?

Defenders of the anti-dumping laws say they are protecting Americans from predatory prices that will ultimately lead to unrestrained gouging. But, if that were the true concern, there would be no need for this antidote; antitrust laws already make it illegal to sell at a loss to kill off a competitor. As the United States conceded in a recent submission to the World Trade Organization, "The anti-dumping rules are not intended as a remedy for predatory pricing practices of firms or as a remedy for any other private anti-competitive practices typically condemned by competition laws."

Anyway, the idea of ruthless foreign producers plotting to destroy their American rivals and then grab the entire U.S. market is about as plausible as alien abduction. For one thing, what company is large enough to do that? Toyota, the

STEVE CHAPMAN is a columnist and editorial writer for the *Chicago Tribune*.

biggest non-U.S. automaker in the world, accounts for less than ten percent of the American market. If steel companies in Brazil, Russia, and South Korea somehow wiped out all U.S. producers, they would still have to compete fiercely with one another—and with dozens of other firms around the world.

Accepting short-term losses makes sense only if you expect to be able to recoup them in the long run. But, in a largely open market such as ours, that's seldom possible, if ever. Assuming a foreign corporation put all of its U.S. competitors out of business, what would happen when it raised prices? New competitors, foreign or domestic, would dive in to grab a share of the windfall. Prices would be driven down, leaving the predator with a painful choice—accepting conventional returns, which would mean it would never make up the losses it deliberately incurred through dumping, or slashing prices again, which would mean it would not only have to swallow the old losses but also take on new ones. Such “predation” defeats itself.

Anti-dumping laws are just another way of shielding U.S. companies from the rigors of open trade. They punish economically rational behavior that benefits American consumers and producers—and uphold the narrow interests of politically influential industries whose real fear is competition. ■

Why budgets really bloat. Wretched Excess

By MATTHEW MILLER

QUICK—WHICH SCENARIO is more likely to occur in your lifetime: (a) large, simultaneous ground wars against Iraq and North Korea or (b) a terrorist attack on the United States with biological weapons? Are smaller classes for every American schoolkid (a) the sure path to higher test scores or (b) a giveaway that wastes billions on the suburbs when inner-city kids really need the help? If you answered (b) to both, you're not only a sensible soul who wants to target effort and resources where they're most needed; you're also an iconoclast at odds with the prevailing sensibility of both political parties. While the press focuses on the demagogic deadlock on taxes and Social Security in this year's budget endgame, Democrats and Republicans will quietly join hands to ratify each other's spending proclivities on defense and education. There's nothing that ails the Pentagon or the schools, they seem to think, that billions of new dollars can't solve.

But something's clearly wrong. We're still giving the Pentagon more than 85 percent of its average cold war funding a decade after the Berlin Wall fell and Russian defense spending collapsed—so how come the troops are exhausted and the

Pentagon asks for more cash each time it actually has to fight? School funding per pupil has more than tripled in real terms since 1965—so how can teacher pay be lousy and so many schools be crumbling? This paradox of aggregate bounty and on-the-ground penury rarely gets discussed. What's going on, and what should we do when too much isn't enough?

These questions rarely get asked, because in today's political culture throwing money at something is the only way to show you're “for” it. Yet it's time to consider them, because, hype to the contrary, there is virtually no surplus outside what both parties have pledged to an eventual Social Security fix. Financing new initiatives will mean realizing savings elsewhere. To be sure, the trade-offs won't involve just defense and schools. But these two giant areas of government provide a good framework for discussion, since together they make up nearly 25 percent of federal, state, and local spending.

Once the “too much isn't enough” paradox is posed, of course, it doesn't take a genius to conclude that we're somehow spending a lot on the wrong things. Can we agree on what those things are and then get the political system to respond? Unpacking these questions may sound like a dull accounting exercise, but, like all budgeting, it's a window into deeper questions facing any political community. How much efficiency and rationality should we expect—or want—from politics? I'll make a confession up front: I got into this out of a guilty sense of intellectual dishonesty about the way I've used macro measures to argue for defense cuts while sidestepping them when calling for more bucks for schools. Now, after talking with a few dozen policy gurus and mulling over what's similar and different about these sectors, I've come to see that my thinking was—well, we'll get to that.

IT'S ODD THAT, even in sectors as seemingly disparate as defense and education, similar dynamics drive spending. The crux of the problem is an ill-defined mission. Everyone wants to “protect the nation” and “teach our kids.” Then the fights start. Should we rely on nuclear submarines or mobile invasion forces? Is phonics the best way to teach reading? Disagreements over means and ends may be baked into democracy, but they're also a recipe for inefficiency. The result is a lowest-common-denominator approach to budgeting that finesses differences by giving something to everyone. Confusion about aims also makes it easier for government bureaucracies to be “captured” by those who are supposed to be working for the public, leaving teachers and generals better served than kids and taxpayers. Social scientists call this phenomenon “goal displacement,” and its maxims affect every corner of the Pentagon and the schools.

Government equals jobs. “Small government” conservatives such as Trent Lott love hometown defense jobs even more than tax cuts. Jobs explain why the military's base structure remains bloated even after recent cuts, why unneeded depots are guarded by a Congressional Depot Caucus, and why new weapons systems somehow happen to have components built in nearly every state.

With schools, the story is the same. Most education dollars are tied up in payroll, most folks on the payroll are unionized and nearly impossible to fire, and many school systems are

MATTHEW MILLER, a syndicated columnist, is a Los Angeles-based senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center.

the biggest employer in town. Even when superintendents know the schools have become de facto jobs programs—crowding out cash for textbooks, supplies, and repairs—there's often little they can do about it. "You're probably going to lose your job if constituency groups are unhappy with the way you allocate your budget," says Ray Cortines, a former superintendent in New York and San Francisco.

Keep doing the same thing, even if it won't work. Dated or ineffective approaches breed constituencies that are hard to dislodge. "Special education," for example—funded mostly by states and local districts—now consumes nearly one in four dollars allotted to K-12 schools. Critics say the "pullout classes" these grants typically fund become ineffectual holding tanks for many students who could be mainstreamed if reached earlier.

In defense, we're also paying a price for old habits as strategic realities change. Take the Armed Forces' plan to spend roughly \$300 billion on three new tactical warplanes. Such planes need to operate from places such as Japan and South Korea. The problem is that new technologies are making these bases vulnerable. Satellite systems will soon let U.S. foes monitor these ports and airfields; the spread of ballistic missiles means that an enemy (say, China, in a showdown over Taiwan) can credibly threaten to take them out in a crisis.

Then there's the military's outmoded organization. "The military has structured itself to support the Powell doctrine—two [major, simultaneous] wars," says Lawrence Korb, a former Reagan defense official now at the Council on Foreign Relations. "They're being asked to support the Clinton doctrine—peacekeeping—and they would prefer not to do it." As a result, most combat-force spending goes to maintain structures we never actually use. Ten 15,000-man Army divisions, for example, basically train as if they might be off for Europe tomorrow to repel the Russians. Only a fraction of Marines really hold the frontline combat rifles; the rest are practicing for the kind of massive amphibious landing we haven't had since Inchon. When it comes to peacekeeping and other ongoing missions, the same small percentage of troops get sent repeatedly to Iraq or Bosnia. No wonder these folks are worn down and want out.

When in doubt, throw money. California's effort to reduce class size in early grades to 20 students has been as popular as it is pricey. Yet experts agree that, dollar for dollar, teacher quality matters more than class size. There's little evidence that reducing class size helps much unless you get down to about 15 kids; even then, gains accrue mostly for disadvantaged children. In a classic case of unintended consequences, however, California's move has created jobs that allow veteran teachers to flee urban schools for easier work in the suburbs, leaving the neediest kids to be taught by rookies. Early studies suggest the impact on achievement has been minimal.

Teacher pay is another case of a wrongheaded union-led push for across-the-board spending hikes. A big raise for all of today's three million teachers would cost tens of billions of dollars while having little impact on student learning. It would confer a windfall on bad teachers and on many who made what they viewed as satisfactory career (and financial) choices long ago. With far less money, you could improve teacher quality dramatically by rewarding the best

teachers, raising pay in specialties (such as math and science) where teacher shortages exist, and funding new teachers at better rates. The uniform pay scales unions like make such initiatives next to impossible.

The Pentagon can throw money with the best of them, of course, with the worst excesses coming in procurement. With the Armed Forces led by former fighter pilots, submariners, and tank commanders, it's no surprise that they're always eager for fancier versions of the usual machines. But the logic of buying higher-tech weapons (such as the F-22) that cost many times more than those they replace is often suspect. It stems partly from the imperative to wage war without casualties. The result is a perverse cycle of higher costs for "standoff" weapons such as cruise missiles or ever-more-untouchable warplanes.

DEADWOOD JOBS, OUTDATED practices, and a flair for throwing cash too broadly at problems: The ways in which schools, the Armed Forces, and other government entities put self-interest (or inertia) ahead of sound finance are so ubiquitous as to be trite. But the policy corollary that flows from this isn't. Mere ranting about government "waste" is silly. The subtler challenge is to balance the economist's sensibility with the politician's. Both want to achieve the maximum good for the public. But the economist, understandably, leans toward targeting money where it can be most effective, while the politician faces understandable pressures to spread it around. Wise governance will always be about managing these tensions in ways that leave a majority satisfied and our institutions accomplishing their basic goals while retaining a capacity to innovate.

So how do we decide when government's inevitable inefficiencies have crossed the line and become intolerable? Here, the differences between sectors such as defense and education prove more illuminating than their similarities.

Regarding defense, the answer starts with a fact that many military officials privately concede: though the cold war ended a decade ago, and despite three supposedly "bottom-up" reviews, we have yet to rethink our strategy, organization, and force structure. The defense debate of the past seven years has been pretty empty. The script runs as follows. The generals say they can't deliver on the nation's two-war strategy (plus new peacekeeping efforts) without billions of dollars more. President Clinton gives them most of what they want in order to protect Democrats from the charge that they're weak on defense. Republicans take whatever number Clinton proposes and raise it a few billion, saying that the funding "gap" implicit in this tiny difference proves Democrats are unfit for world leadership.

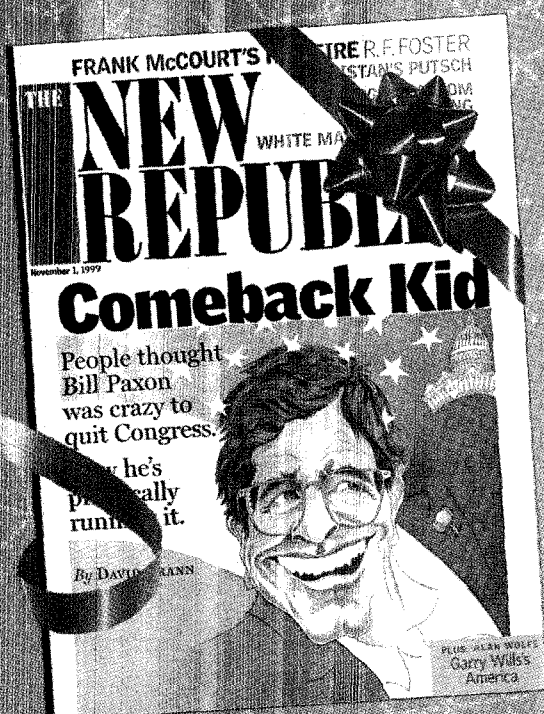
Advocates for defense hikes rightly note that we've cut the military from its Reagan-era peak while deploying it on dozens of small missions, such as those in Haiti and Bosnia. Military spending peaked in 1986-1987 at 6.2 percent of GDP and 2.2 million active-duty troops; we're down to 3.2 percent and 1.4 million troops today. But we're not going to war against Ronald Reagan's military. And the diminished spending as a share of GDP doesn't suggest anything but the capacity to do more if we think that's wise. Defense is the

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kind of fixed cost that shouldn't necessarily rise with national income anyway; you don't buy a new home-security system every time you get a raise.

If current bipartisan plans are adopted, however, we'll shortly bring today's \$280 billion defense budget toward parity with the \$325 billion spent on average each year between 1950 and 1990 (in current dollars). How can this be necessary? The United States already spends more on defense than the next ten nations combined, eight of whom are our allies. China and Russia each strain to spend one-fifth of our total. Iraq, Iran, and North Korea spend \$5 billion or less apiece. We spend more than \$30 billion on our arsenal of 6,000 nuclear warheads alone. Europe, which now boasts a greater collective GDP and population than the United States, spends \$100 billion less each year on defense; per capita, our NATO allies spend half as much as we do.

We could spend \$50 billion less and still meet our obligations to our allies, according to Korb. This would require scrapping the two-major-war "requirement" (which the brass privately term a fiction anyway) in favor of a "one war plus" Bosnia-style peacekeeping capability. It would free up resources to address cyberterrorists and other rogue threats and would revamp today's heavy divisions into lighter, more mobile units. Sadly, the leadership needed to force this overdue debate is AWOL. George W. Bush just said he wants to throw another \$25 billion at defense. John McCain seeks reform but not savings. Al Gore is determined to protect his right flank. Bill Bradley has yet to speak on the issue; perhaps he'll see that sensible defense cuts would go a long way toward the \$65 billion a year he needs for universal health care.

THE DIRECTION FOR schools is murkier. Spending keeps soaring, while test scores remain flat. But there are mitigating factors. First is William Baumol's famous 1960s theory of "cost disease," which posits that labor-intensive parts of the economy—symphonies, theaters, and schools, for instance—are immune from the technology-based productivity gains the rest of the economy enjoys. A string quartet must always be a string quartet; you can't reduce the number of musicians or swap in robots. Wages in these sectors rise with market-wide compensation. But, without the offsetting productivity gains that goods-producing, capital-intensive sectors enjoy, says Baumol, cost increases in the "productivity-immune" sectors will always be above average.

Another mitigating factor is that, even though most increases in school spending over the decades have gone to teachers, pay is still awful (salaries start at \$26,000 and reach just \$39,000, on average). This especially hurts at a time when two million new recruits are needed in the next decade. We're also asking schools to do more. Urban districts cope with children who speak dozens of languages. Broken families and poverty bring drugs, dysfunction, and violence. In the old days, dropouts could find union jobs that paid enough to land a family in the middle class. With those jobs gone, schools now try to raise all students to levels of achievement once expected only of the college-bound.

To be sure, the fact that we can spend more per pupil than other G-7 nations and still rack up a \$100 billion repair back-

log means that incentives for smart spending don't exist. The broad answer is to make new money conditional on systemic reform. Put cash on the table for teachers, for example, so long as unions let it be targeted in ways that really boost quality. Use carrots and sticks to spur more effective use of the billions now devoted to helping disabled or poor students, as both George W. Bush and President Clinton have proposed.

BUT INSISTING ON reform before adding fresh cash is a position that's easy to take when you're not affected by the wait. "Look, kids," this approach tells inner-city students, "I know your building is falling apart, and you've got no libraries or textbooks or computers, but we've really got to get the incentives right before we can tackle that." This can't be right. Think of a kid from a housing project who's never been read to and can't hold a pencil before he comes to school. When that child doesn't score as well on achievement tests as children of the suburban middle class, that doesn't mean his school stinks. "The national conversation has no way of accounting for that distinction," says analyst Richard Rothstein. The principle seems clear: When schools serving high-need kids spend less today than schools near them, the need for more cash should trump concerns for efficiency. Philadelphia, for example, spends \$6,900 per pupil; the surrounding suburbs spend \$1,900 more. David Hornbeck, Philly's superintendent, has a plan to add pre-K, after-school, and summer programs, plus smaller classes and computers, for \$1,750 per child. Pennsylvania should supply the money.

What about districts that serve high-need kids but already spend more than most? Welcome to New Jersey. It's fair to force districts such as Camden and Newark to reform and reallocate within their outsized \$10,000-per-pupil budgets. At the margin, that may punish poor kids for living in mismanaged towns. But you have to draw the line somewhere.

"There's nothing that systematically forces people to look for things that aren't working and reallocate the dollars," gripes Eric Hanushek, the education economist. "Whoever said politics was rational?" Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan sighs. On defense and schools, as with all public functions, the beginning of wisdom when too much doesn't seem to be enough lies in the yin and yang of these truisms, in balancing the virtues of efficiency and inefficiency.

That's a fancy way of saying that, after talking with experts, as well as with soldiers and teachers, I'm convinced that complacency about the Pentagon's budgetary "top line" remains a problem in ways it simply isn't for schools. In defense, the world has turned, yet our strategic drift is papered over by spending hikes while opportunities for savings—and sounder defense strategy—go unexploited. In education, there's greater consensus on the direction reform should take while the chance for savings is minor. Yes, money is often spent ineffectively, but, because schools are so decentralized, there are thousands of experiments to learn from and as many funding sources to keep on the heat for results. In defense, only a new vision offered from the top can move the iceberg. In other words, though I can better spell out their warts and nuances now, I guess I'm sticking with my original beliefs after all. ■

Linda Shenwick, whistle-blower or blowhard?

The Source

By JACOB HEILBRUNN and RYAN LIZZA

TO HER CONSERVATIVE Republican supporters, Linda Shenwick is a martyr to the cause of rooting out government waste, fraud, and mismanagement. Republicans say that because Shenwick, a career State Department official who has won numerous commendations over the course of her 13-year career, blew the whistle on serious misconduct by both State Department and U.N. officials, a vengeful Madeleine Albright has engineered her removal from the U.S. mission to the United Nations. And, they say, now that Shenwick has had the temerity to fight back, the secretary of state and her minions have launched a smear campaign. Representative Dan Burton of Indiana calls Shenwick "another example of people being taken to the cross, so to speak, and nailed to it." Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa says he's "never seen such a blatant, raw attempt to harass and silence a whistle-blower." In retaliation, Grassley delayed the already overdue confirmation vote on Richard Holbrooke's appointment as the new U.S. ambassador to the United Nations for another two months, and, after releasing Holbrooke for confirmation, promptly put "holds" on three other Clinton ambassadorial appointees to ensure that Shenwick is treated "fairly" by the State Department.

This, at least, is the version of events that has made it into the media as Shenwick and her combative Washington lawyer, Victoria Toensing, have appeared unopposed on such outlets as Fox News and ABC's "Nightline." (State Department officials are constrained in what they can say publicly about the case because Shenwick has not waived her privacy rights under civil service protection laws.) But, to Shenwick's equally passionate, and numerous, critics, this is anything but "MADELEINE ALBRIGHT'S VENDETTA," as *The Weekly Standard* headlined a recent profile of Shenwick. Former colleagues paint a vivid picture of a petty, vindictive person who deserved to be fired and is now manipulating Congress in order to obscure her own history of questionable conduct and bureaucratic backstabbing. "Both sides are right on this one," says a former State Department colleague of Shenwick's. "Yes, they've been trying to get rid of her, and, yes, she should be gotten rid of."

The case is extraordinarily complex. One thing is clear, though: Early in her career, Shenwick herself was the subject of embarrassing leaks. In the mid-'80s, Senator Jesse Helms raised the issue of alleged abuses in the U.S. mission's housing-subsidy program, which had been created to compensate State employees for the unusually high cost of apartments in Manhattan. Drawing on an internal State Department report, United Press International reported on September 20, 1987, that "Linda Shenwick, the administra-

tive chief who runs the housing program ... bought a \$475,000 condominium and paid the mortgage with the help of her \$1,800 monthly subsidy in 1985. Shenwick, who earns \$53,000 a year, and three other owners sold the condo at a \$150,000 profit."

Six months later, a report by the State Department inspector general noted that, according to government regulations, the housing supplements were "not to assist in the purchase of privately owned homes" except under unusual circumstances. The report also noted that "[t]axpayers, who were struggling to pay their own mortgages were probably less than pleased to find they were also paying for [U.S. mission] employees to purchase houses." Shenwick says she did nothing wrong, and the I.G. did not accuse her of breaking the law. Indeed, she was kept on at the U.S. mission after the flap and was promoted to the elite Senior Executive Service in 1988.

Still, the episode did demonstrate the power that conservative Senate Republicans have to make and unmake the careers of State Department officials. And, soon thereafter, Shenwick began feeding information about alleged wrongdoing at the United Nations to the press, the I.G., and, above all, conservative Republicans in Congress.

This campaign began before Albright became U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in 1993. Three years earlier, Shenwick reported President Bush's ambassador to the United Nations, career diplomat Thomas Pickering, to the State Department I.G. for allegedly allowing his wife to use an official car for personal use and bypassing competitive bidding regulations when buying home furniture (the I.G. found no evidence of wrongdoing). In 1992 and again in 1995, she told the press that the Tanzanian chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (the important U.N. budget committee, known as the ACABQ, on which Shenwick represented the United States) had hired a woman he was living with to become his assistant at the United Nations.

In 1993, Shenwick told the *New York Post* that Albright's pick for a U.N. spot had conflict-of-interest problems. In 1994, she worked with Senator Larry Pressler's staff to develop 120 confirmation-hearing questions for David Birenbaum, the Clinton administration's appointee to head up the U.S. drive for internal reform at the United Nations (and Shenwick's prospective new boss). One of the questions Shenwick and Pressler came up with: "How many people are in the [U.N.] Office of Inspections and Investigations?" After Birenbaum made it through his hearing and finally arrived at the United Nations, Shenwick promptly reported him to the State Department I.G., accusing him of using official funds to travel home to Washington, D.C., on weekends (the I.G. cleared Birenbaum).

SHENWICK SAYS THAT these and other cases prompted U.S. officials to launch a no-holds-barred drive to get her out. According to Shenwick, the first one to try was Pickering, who, she alleged, threatened her with negative evaluations that would have ended her career. Shenwick filed a complaint with the Office of Special Counsel, a government agency that investigates whistle-blower claims. She maintained that Pickering had

retaliated against her for whistle-blowing. The two settled the case with Pickering admitting no wrongdoing and with Shenwick still in her job. But details of the sensitive case were leaked to the press before the start of the 1993 Senate hearings on Pickering's nomination as ambassador to Russia.

In September 1995, Shenwick alerted Pressler to what she saw as the Clinton administration's attempts to dislodge her. Shenwick said that U.S. officials at the United Nations tried to remove her and that Birenbaum threatened to give her an unsatisfactory evaluation and to refuse to support her re-nomination to the ACABQ. Several Republicans let Albright know that they supported Shenwick, which, Shenwick claims, infuriated Albright. Indeed, in February, Albright told Shenwick that she would not be the American candidate for the ACABQ.

Albright's next move, Shenwick says, was to bring retired U.S. official Herbert Gelber back to the U.S. mission to serve as her superior and to produce a negative evaluation of her performance. Gelber did just that. His December 1996 evaluation said Shenwick ignored American policy and substituted her own views for official policy in the U.N. committees she served on. Under government regulations, the "unsatisfactory" rating permitted the State Department to remove Shenwick, which it did. In April 1997, Shenwick went back to the Office of Special Counsel, alleging that Albright and four other State officials had retaliated against her for whistle-blowing.

AND SO, FOR the past two years, the Office of Special Counsel has been investigating Shenwick's claims and the State Department's counterclaims. Since State has conceded, in a letter to Grassley, that some of Shenwick's reports of alleged abuses to the media, Congress, and the State Department I.G. do, in fact, fall under the broad definition of whistle-blowing contained in the 1989 Whistle-blower Protection Act, the department is required to prove that she would have been fired even if she hadn't made any protected disclosures.

According to officials, State's brief against Shenwick revolves around a number of issues—some petty, some less so. The first concerns a former Mexican delegate named Jorge Jose Duhalt. U.N. and U.S. government sources say Shenwick was romantically involved with Duhalt and that she contravened U.S. policy and explicit instructions from the U.S. mission in order to help him get a U.N. job. U.S. policy, says a State Department official, "is to only make efforts to get Americans jobs at the U.N."

Duhalt, now living in Belgium, said in an interview, "I don't want to discuss my private life with anyone. I am good friends with Linda Shenwick and admire and respect her." He did say, however, that Shenwick provided him with information that helped him apply for a job in the U.N. administration and management department. Shenwick, too, refuses to discuss her personal life. She adds, "I did not make strenuous efforts to get him a job at all—period, end of discussion."

But, according to Denis J. Halliday, who was U.N. assistant secretary general for human resources management during the mid-'90s, Shenwick asked Halliday to forward Duhalt's candidacy for a position to Joseph Connor, the U.N. under-

secretary general for administration and management. When we asked Shenwick whether she had talked to Halliday about getting Duhalt a job, she responded, "No. Did I talk to Mr. Halliday about getting Jorge Duhalt a job? The answer is no, unequivocally no." This may be strictly true. But a memo that Halliday wrote to Connor says that Halliday, after an inquiry from Shenwick, agreed to help Duhalt by waiving the deadline for applying for the position. Later in our interview with her, Shenwick conceded that she did indeed speak to Halliday, but only about the deadline. "I raised that with Halliday," she says. In any event, Duhalt was rejected for the job.

Then there is the question of how Shenwick used official funds to entertain Duhalt. State Department sources say that an inappropriate, disproportionate share of her expenditures of funds designated for business-related meals and entertainment went to frequent meetings with Duhalt. Duhalt, who describes himself as one of the "shakers and movers" on the ACABQ, said that the expenses were "probably" a large share of Shenwick's total, but there was nothing unusual about that. "We met very, very often to discuss things, and occasionally she paid for a coffee or a dinner," he says. "But I did the same thing with other delegates." After our interview, Duhalt provided Shenwick's lawyer with a sworn "declaration" saying, in part, "At all times when I attended representational events hosted by Ms. Shenwick our relationship was strictly professional." Toensing adds, regarding Shenwick herself: "At all times that there was [*sic*] representational funds used, there was nothing but a professional relationship."

THE SECOND ISSUE involves Shenwick's role as a delegate to the Fifth Committee, a General Assembly body that deals with budgetary and administrative matters. State Department sources say that, in March 1997, Shenwick proposed two paragraphs—numbers 26 and 27 of U.N. Resolution 51/226—without informing her superiors. The purpose of these paragraphs, according to government officials, was to structure the eligibility requirements for certain jobs at the United Nations so as to prevent a woman named Pamela Johnson, who was a U.N. consultant on reform, from getting a permanent U.N. job—and to help Duhalt obtain one. According to both U.S. and U.N. sources, paragraph 27 was known among delegates on the committee that approved it as the "Duhalt paragraph." Shenwick says these accusations are false and that the paragraphs were actually introduced by a German delegate, Wolfgang Stöckl. She also argues that, if the U.S. government objected to the language, it had ample opportunity to revise it. When we first asked Stöckl about his role, he replied, "I was not involved in these paragraphs." Later, via e-mail, Stöckl volunteered that the omnibus resolution was adopted "by consensus"—but he did not comment on the paragraphs. Two U.N. delegates with knowledge of the negotiations dispute Shenwick's account. "When Linda tells you that Stöckl introduced them," says one, "that introduction was a technicality. It was widely known that she was the force behind these paragraphs." Duhalt now says that he would have been uninterested in the

jobs that became available under the resolution anyway.

Finally, there are Shenwick's contacts with the Cuban delegate on the ACABQ. "It was widely thought through her relationship with the Cuban on the ACABQ she was being manipulated," says a retired American official, echoing the comments of other diplomats. At a meeting in Washington in the early summer of 1994 where U.S. strategy for pushing through a new U.N. inspector general was discussed, Shenwick told U.S. officials she had learned that the Cuban delegation, which was blocking the appointment of the new I.G., might be interested in a deal. According to an official who attended the meeting, Shenwick suggested that the Cubans might support the I.G. initiative were the United States to help the Cuban delegate, Even Fontaine-Ortiz, secure a high-level position at the U.N. Joint Inspection Unit, which audits U.N. specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization.

Ortiz worked closely with Shenwick on the 16-member ACABQ. He was the chief Cuban negotiator on the I.G. matter. And he was one of only a few members of the delegation from Communist Cuba to be invited to U.S. mission receptions. The source present at the meeting said officials were stunned that Shenwick would propose such an arrangement with a member of a delegation widely known to serve as a cover for intelligence operations and added that she was told not to communicate with the Cubans on this matter under any circumstances. By the end of the negotiations, however, Cuba had dropped its opposition to the I.G., and Ortiz did indeed leave the ACABQ for a new job as executive secretary of the Joint Inspection Unit.

CONGRESS FIRST PASSED the Whistleblower Protection Act in 1988, in the wake of scandals involving Pentagon contractors ripping off the government and defects in the safety of the air traffic control system and the space shuttle. The law sought to protect government insiders who reveal major wrongdoing by making it easier for them to prove that they had been retaliated against for their disclosures. President Reagan vetoed the bill, however, insisting that he wanted to be sure "that federal personnel managers are not burdened with routinely defending appropriate personnel decisions."

But Congress persisted, and President Bush signed the act in 1989, giving bureaucrats protection from government reprisal for reporting what the act called "a violation of any law, rule or regulation, or gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety." Shenwick's leaks and disclosures to the press and to Congress may fit the letter of this law, but what about its spirit? Was this the kind of "gross" misconduct that the authors of the act intended to root out? Add up the dollar value of the alleged misfeasance Shenwick reported—including such items as Ambassador Pickering's purportedly excessive furniture—and it's not clear that it rises to the level of a multimillion-dollar Pentagon cost overrun. Ironically, the Shenwick case, for all its backing from the Republican right, seemingly confirms Reagan's original misgivings about the scope of the act. "If I wanted to get a lifetime job in government," says one of Shenwick's former col-

leagues, "there are controversies. Any job has issues. All you need to do is get a memo that's been written on Tough Issue A and fax it to the Senate. Then say, 'Oh, you're picking on me because I faxed the Senate.'"

Take the issue of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's 1997 commitment to reduce U.N. staff by 1,000 and to pass the first zero-growth budget in U.N. history. This was a major reform demanded by Congress and the Clinton administration. And yet, two weeks before Annan's budget was to be publicly announced in May 1997, Shenwick gave *The Washington Times* a memo she had prepared for Ambassador Bill Richardson. The memo said Annan's proposal would cut only 850 to 880 positions and continue growth in the budget.

But was this a clear case of "gross" misconduct by anyone, or simply Shenwick's own debatable interpretation of a contentious set of accounting facts? As it turns out, Annan eliminated 1,000 U.N. posts and did indeed achieve a zero-growth budget. In congressional testimony that Shenwick herself points to as supporting her budget position, GAO Associate Director Harold Jim Johnson noted on June 22 of this year that the United Nations "has maintained essentially a no-growth budget for the last couple of bienniums." Shenwick insists that the budget did grow but that the increases are being hidden by U.N. accounting tricks.

SOON THE UNITED STATES will win back the seat on the ACABQ that it lost in 1996. Conservatives on the Hill have made a U.S. presence on the committee a prerequisite for paying U.S. arrears to the United Nations. Shenwick's designated replacement, Susan Shearouse, is now in line to serve on that committee for three years, and even Shenwick's biggest boosters may be reluctant to disrupt the politics at the U.S. mission by supporting Shenwick's restoration. Indeed, after a recent trip to the United Nations, Shenwick ally Senator Rod Grams did not mention Shenwick's plight, but he lauded the administration's new progress on U.N. reform. And now even one conservative Republican Senate aide concedes that Shenwick's leaks were "not selfless" and that she "was always feeding information [to Congress] to serve her own purposes."

Still, Shenwick and Toensing are not about to give up. During a three-and-a-half-hour interview at Toensing's office, Shenwick sat demurely between Toensing and Toensing's son Brady, an associate in his mother's firm. A petite woman with short black hair, Shenwick spoke coolly and deliberately for most of the long interview.

Only the subject of Shearouse seemed to stir her. Without prompting, Shenwick launched into a monologue about Shearouse's purported peccadilloes at the United Nations. Shifting to the edge of the couch and stabbing the air excitedly with her hands, Shenwick spun a baroque scenario so prejudicial to Shearouse and so difficult to verify that we won't mention the alleged details here. Suffice it to say that Shenwick's story dealt with seemingly arcane instances of supposed nepotism and conflicts of interest involving Shearouse's ex-husband and current boyfriend. When we asked Shenwick the basis for one particularly damaging suggestion, she replied, "I just know, OK?" Her tale finished, she sat back on the couch and smiled what seemed to be a very satisfied smile. ■

Bill Paxon's triumphant return to Capitol Hill.

Comeback Kid

By DAVID GRANN

"Paxon is the world's most replaceable man. . . . He will be forgotten in months, if not minutes."

—*Slate* magazine, after Representative Bill Paxon of New York abruptly announced his retirement last year.

ONE DAY NOT so long ago Bill Paxon returned to the place from which he had exiled himself. As the former congressman, who was once widely expected to succeed Newt Gingrich as speaker of the House, entered the Capitol, he had to wait in line with tourists and the other lobbyists, then confront another set of indignities: metal detectors and baggage checks. From afar, with his perfectly combed hair, immaculate teeth, and a face so guileless it was a mainstay of the party's network, GOP TV, he still looked like the 38-year-old wunderkind who had orchestrated the Republicans' takeover of the House in 1994 and then risen steadily in the leadership until, on the threshold of becoming speaker, he mysteriously and inexplicably walked away from it all, disappearing in a hail of rumors and conspiracy theories.

Now, as he stood stiffly in the heat, no one seemed to recognize him. But, as the tourists lingered in the rotunda, looking up at the frescoed ceiling, Paxon suddenly headed down a narrow hallway, passing a sign reading DO NOT ENTER and a series of armed guards, until he arrived at the office of the current House speaker, Dennis Hastert—and vanished inside. A few days later, the former congressman was seen again, this time working the phones in his successor's office, and, shortly after that, eating in the House's members-only dining room. "I run into him everywhere," says Thomas Reynolds, who now represents Paxon's old New York district.

Officially, Paxon is still an outsider: a "senior adviser" at the law firm of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer, & Feld, he is legally barred, like all former representatives, from directly lobbying Congress on specific legislation until a full year has passed since his retirement. Unofficially, he is one of the city's newest behind-the-scenes power brokers, a member of the speaker's coterie of select advisers who meet regularly over coffee and Cokes in the Capitol's Lincoln Room to plot Republican strategy and tactics. Among Hastert's inner circle, Paxon is considered perhaps the most trusted: the two men speak every week, sometimes every day. Last spring, Hastert asked Paxon to oversee the most politically explosive issue before Congress: funding for the 2000 census, which shapes the boundaries of congressional districts across the country and could determine who controls the House for the next decade. The two men are so close, leadership aides say, that the speaker has begun to use Paxon's idiosyncratic

phrases in conversation, as in, "We'll do the spending bills, then *pivot* to tax cuts." "He's someone who has a great strategic mind and whom we rely on for a lot of advice," acknowledges John Feehery, Hastert's spokesman. Others go further: "He's the one really running the House," says one reporter who has covered Congress for more than a decade.

Paxon also pops up in the office of House Majority Whip Tom DeLay. On Wednesdays, as the chaplain delivers the morning prayer, Paxon gathers with a small band of lobbyists in the whip's office, laying out, among other things, how to promote tax cuts and raise more than \$20 million to counter the labor movement's get-out-the-vote efforts on behalf of Democrats. "I do more politics today than I ever did before," Paxon tells me cheerfully.

Indeed, Paxon has reconstructed his empire by exploiting the confluence of money and politics. Using the roughly \$125,000 left over in his congressional PAC, he has legally funneled thousands of dollars into other members' coffers, receiving unspoken IOUs. He has held fund-raisers for dozens of representatives, including every member of the House leadership. He even staged an event for a congressman's son running for Missouri secretary of state. "He is one of the few in this town who understand the intersection between building coalitions and fund-raising and moving legislation," says Representative John Boehner, the former head of the GOP Conference.

In his latest move, Paxon has set himself up as one of George W. Bush's principal conduits to Congress, raising more than \$100,000 for the governor's presidential campaign, recommending staff, and lining up congressional endorsements. He communicates with the campaign every day through Maria Cino, his former top aide, who is now Bush's political director. Serving as a sort of shadow speaker (though Paxon is careful never to speak of himself in those terms), aides say he has even begun an informal effort to smooth over recent conflicts between House Republicans and Bush and to appear on television as a more genial face for Congressional Republicans.

AT FIRST, PAXON'S trajectory may seem like a familiar Washington tale, that of another powerful politician who steps through the revolving door and reemerges as a highly paid lobbyist. But, in fact, it's almost unprecedented. In the era before the Republican revolution in 1994, politicians typically became lobbyists at the end of their careers, when they had lost the stamina for elected office or scandal had forced them out. K Street was like the PGA

senior tour—cushy and lucrative, but ultimately outside the center of the action. Today, that's no longer the case. There is no inner sanctuary reserved for the people's representatives. Representative Bill Paxon ended that distinction, and now he is the ultimate product of the world he helped create.

Once upon a time Paxon was being groomed for the leadership through the traditional channels. "There is no question that he would have been elected speaker someday," says GOP Representative Steve Largent of Oklahoma. In fact, with the retirement of his mentor, Gingrich, and the unexpected resignation of Robert Livingston last year, it would

ity party just suddenly decide to bag it all?" asked *The Washington Post*. There had to be something more, something hidden. *Slate* wrote that Paxon's account was "totally out of character" and that those who believed it "should be disbarred for their simple-mindedness."

As the weeks passed, rumors began to spread: maybe Paxon had been caught in an illicit affair or blackmailed by his rivals. Reporters started to dig into his past, calling his family, his friends, and even his classmates from elementary school in their futile search for something, anything, to explain his actions. But what no one realized was that Paxon

was not defying the rules of politics; he simply understood them better than anyone else did.

As early as 1992, Paxon could sense the tectonic plates shifting underneath the city. In another move that seemed to defy political wisdom, he ran for a job that almost nobody else wanted: head of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). To most congressmen, the organization was a political graveyard—"the valley of the shadow of death," as Paxon often called it. Cre-



DENIS PAQUIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

have been sooner than someday: it would have been now. But, in an extraordinary act that still reverberates inside the Beltway, Paxon called a press conference on a cold day in February 1998 and announced that, at age 43, he was retiring from Congress and would never run for office again, not even that of dogcatcher.

It seemed an act of utter self-immolation. "I can't remember anyone just walking away from power," says Martin Tolchin, publisher of *The Hill* newspaper, who has covered Washington for more than 25 years. What was most remarkable was not just the act but the person who had committed it: a man who compared politics to "a narcotic," who had proposed to his wife, former Representative Susan Molinari, on the House floor, and who spent much of their honeymoon on the phone with Gingrich. "Politics has been much more than simply a job for me," he acknowledged in his farewell letter to his colleagues. "This has been my life."

Paxon insisted, over and over, that he had merely wanted to spend more time with his family. "I don't understand why it's so hard for people to believe that," his mother, Patricia Paxon, says testily. But, in a city where power is considered an aphrodisiac, few could. Why would "a rising star in the major-

ated to bankroll Republican candidates for the House across the country, by 1992 it had accumulated more than \$4.4 million in debt and had lost its most important asset: the ability to raise money. Worse, there seemed to be no way out. Because Democrats had controlled the majority for the past 40 years, they could peddle the one thing the Republicans couldn't: access to the committee chairmen who set the Hill's agenda.

But Paxon saw in this moribund operation his opportunity. He overhauled the NRCC's infrastructure, cutting its staff by more than half and replacing the names of deceased people on its antiquated donor lists with the names of live ones. Now, he knew, all he had to do was shift to the GOP the mostly Democrat-directed flow of money from K Street, the stretch of downtown Washington, D.C., law firms that had sprung up in the 1960s to influence Congress and had come to symbolize the lobbying game throughout the city. With the help of Gingrich, he canvased the city, wooing businesses back into the fold with a simple, seductive pitch: This is the year finally to change who's in the room rather than to try merely to get access to the room. As the 1994 election approached, Paxon and his aides worked the phones

endlessly, cajoling and browbeating potential donors. At one meeting, Gingrich even stepped in and famously threatened: "For anybody that's not on board now, it's going to be the coldest two years in Washington."

As the results came in that November 9, it became clear that the little-known congressman from Amherst, New York, had helped engineer one of the greatest upsets in recent political history. Not a single Republican incumbent lost. During the final weeks, records would later show, PACs gave three times as much to Republican challengers as to Democratic ones. If Gingrich was now seen as the revolution's manic visionary, Paxon was its cool-headed architect. More importantly, he was the speaker's new protégé.

DURING THE CAMPAIGN, Gingrich and Paxon had spent hours together in the back room of the Hunan Dynasty restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue, plotting how to capture the House. Now, on the heels of their victory, they plotted how to maintain it. At the heart of this effort was the "K Street Strategy," a plan even more detailed than their election one to transform the city's businesses and trade associations into a permanent new power base.

As the first step, Paxon distributed a report to all Republican House members documenting how much each of the 400 largest PACs had given to Democrats and Republicans during the previous election cycle. He organized them under three columns—"friendly," "unfriendly," or "neutral," as if they were countries on the verge of a war. Republicans brandished the report in meetings with lobbyists, gleefully banishing "unfriendly" ones from the room. "Why do you support the enemy?" Paxon would relentlessly ask business leaders.

Around town, corporations scrambled to appear "friendly," deluging the NRCC with soft money. But Paxon wanted more than just occasional contributions. Along with Gingrich and DeLay, he wanted to rebuild the very foundation of the lobbying industry, replacing Democrats with loyal Republicans. Headhunters representing clients who feared being shut out called his office, asking for staff recommendations. When one company hired a prominent Republican, Paxon responded, according to a lobbyist, "That's not enough." Paxon allegedly even started a second list detailing the employment history of each lobbyist in town, trying to weed out Democrats, independents, and moderate Republicans, whom the leadership dubbed "squishes." At the last minute, says one of the people familiar with the plan, Paxon scrapped it, fearing accusations of "McCarthyism." But he no longer needed the plan. By then, Paxon had "almost single-handedly converted K Street from overwhelmingly Democratic to leaning Republican," says Larry Sabato, a professor of government at the University of Virginia.

In the Paxon era, K Street fueled the House Republican machinery. During the summer of 1995, the same week that the Appropriations Committee voted against ending a federal price-support program for tobacco, one of Paxon's colleagues passed out \$500 PAC checks from tobacco giant Brown & Williamson to GOP members on the House floor. Under Democrats, the line between Capitol Hill and

K Street had always been blurred; now it seemed to vanish altogether. Lobbyists walked in and out of committee rooms, passing out pizzas. GOP members referred inquiring reporters to lobbyists for briefings. During a House Resources subcommittee hearing, one representative from the firm Hunton & Williams climbed onto the dais as if he were a congressman—an embarrassing spectacle the Republicans were careful not to repeat. In another instance, lobbyists from the American Petroleum Institute drafted whole chunks of a controversial bill reducing corporate liability for toxic waste.

Paxon himself waded into the mix. As David Maraniss and Michael Weisskopf wrote in *The Washington Post*, Paxon helped change the final language in the telecommunications bill—a bill he had just voted for on the Commerce Committee—after meeting with lobbyists from the Baby Bells. One of the beneficiaries, Nynex, later transferred \$100,000 in soft money to Paxon's NRCC. By the spring of 1996, "the valley of the shadow of death" had raised \$50 million, more than three times the total of the Democratic campaign committee. Drawing on this huge pile of cash, Paxon helped reelect a GOP majority for the first time in more than 65 years. "He was a hero to all of us," says Representative Mark Foley of Florida. Afterward, Gingrich created a special office for Paxon in the Capitol and anointed him chairman of the Republican leadership, a position established just for Paxon.

But in the spring of 1997 Paxon's rise suddenly seemed imperiled. Gingrich had grown increasingly erratic, his weight and moods fluctuating daily. According to Molinari, Gingrich would sometimes call, weeping and muttering about the burden of "saving the world." The House was slipping into chaos, with pro- and anti-Newt factions fighting in the open.

Then, one summer night, a group of disgruntled Republicans launched a bungled coup to depose Gingrich and replace him with Paxon. Paxon denied he would have participated. But, when the news of the coup filtered out, Paxon's old mentor expelled him from the leadership. According to Molinari's account, at one point Gingrich yelled at the man he had once groomed for his job: "You don't understand how I operate and never will. I get up every morning and say to myself, 'This is the day I shall die.'"

But, in the aftermath, it was Paxon who emerged as a martyr—the one person, it seemed, who could unite both conservatives and moderates. Members beseeched him to attend their fund-raisers across the country and to challenge Dick Armey for majority leader, a position that would place him directly in line for the speakership. Then, for no apparent reason, Paxon quit the race and vanished.

WHEN I ARRIVE at Akin, Gump one Friday afternoon, I meet first with Bob Strauss, a senior partner. He is the prototype of the old K Street: a longtime Democrat, a former ambassador to the Soviet Union, and a confidant of presidents whose face remains unrecognizable to most Americans. Now 80 years old, he has presided over the changing of the guard at one of

the last staunchly Democratic firms in the country. "I'm just an old man," he says. "Things have changed."

After our interview, he escorts me to a modest office on the third floor, where Paxon stands and says, "Come in. Come in."

Strauss looks around the room for a minute. C-SPAN is playing on a small television. On the couch is a pillow embroidered with the Great Seal of the United States and the words "The House of Representatives." "He's our franchise player," Strauss finally says.

Paxon smiles. "I just try to absorb Bob's aura through the wall," he says. As Strauss heads back down the corridor, Paxon opens two Cokes. "I still haven't set everything up," he says, sitting down. He looks just as he always has, his hair perfectly combed, his eyes blinking eagerly through wire-rimmed glasses. He has the perfect veneer for a politician: it emits warmth without exposing a hint of inner life.

"It's no secret that Akin, Gump had a reputation as a Democratic-leaning firm," he says when I ask him what he's doing. "So I'm trying to focus more on Republican activities here and around the country." He happily ticks off his duties: serving clients such as Americans for Affordable Electricity (a utility industry group), placing more Republicans in jobs on K Street, raising money for Bush, and meeting with the House leadership. "When I said I wasn't interested in running for office, people interpreted that and said, 'Oh my God, there must be something there. He's just walking away.' They missed the point. Running for office is a means to an end, just as being here is. I feel more involved in politics today than when I was in Congress. I don't need to attend to all the constituent service: the parades, the county dinners, the endless events. I feel good. I'm not out of the loop. I now find myself being the counselor to members." He pauses for a minute, as if contemplating his new life, then adds, "If you lay out a game plan, you don't miss a beat."

THIS, SAY PAXON'S close associates, was always the plan. "He had mentioned going to K Street to me almost two years earlier," says one House Republican who worked closely with him. Patricia Paxon says her son stopped replacing staff in his Buffalo office months before he sprang the news. Paxon himself says the announcement was not sudden but delayed by nearly two years: first because he had to oversee the close 1996 elections, then because he was running Gingrich's campaign for speaker, and finally because of the coup and the sudden pressure he felt to run for majority leader. "It's very heady to talk about being majority leader, maybe running for speaker some day," he says. "On the other hand, I'd already made a decision to leave. And so it was tearing at me—what I ought to do. And so finally, in February of 1998, I had to make a decision. I thought, 'All right, I'll run,' and for a few days I thought about it and then I just couldn't get myself excited. . . . And that was the end of it."

Unlike those who watched in disbelief, Paxon understood that the balance of power within the city had shifted radically under his direction: how on the new K Street he could have just as much influence, if not more, than in a divided and balkanized House; how he could make more than five times what he had earned in Congress (reportedly \$750,000 in

annual salary from Akin, Gump); and, finally, how he could do all these things and still see his wife and kids at night. "Bill had always talked about leaving," says Molinari. "I wasn't surprised, based on that. But the fact that he loved being a congressman so much—it was still hard to imagine. I couldn't yet see what he saw: that there was a way to be on the outside and still be on the inside." Not just partly on the inside, like the lobbyists of old, but at the center of governing. Adds his friend David Rehr, a lobbyist from the National Beer Wholesalers Association, "He always knew that his power wouldn't diminish."

People on the Hill say Paxon has been careful not to violate the law that prohibits former members from directly lobbying Congress on specific legislation for a full year. Still, even temporarily hemmed in by the ethics laws, he has assumed an unprecedented role for a lobbyist on K Street—not merely writing legislation, as lobbyists did in the old days and as he will be able to do in a few months, but helping to set the entire House agenda. According to colleagues, he has assisted in shaping the Republicans' strategy for the next two years: appeal to the base with tax cuts, avoid contentious social issues, and let Bush dictate the agenda until after the election. "With a five-seat majority, it would be impossible to *pivot* overnight from defense to an overreaching offense," he says, sounding like Hastert sounding like Paxon. As the shadow speaker, he has also stepped out from the background, appearing frequently on CNBC, CNN, and Fox News Channel as an unofficial spokesman for the party.

Paxon's colleagues on the Hill, who only a few months ago had looked at him with pity, now stare at him with awe. "He's got the perfect situation," says GOP Representative Jennifer Dunn of Washington state. Adds Illinois Representative Ray LaHood, "He's sittin' in the catbird seat."

ON A FALL day, Paxon hurries from his office to a congressional fund-raiser near the Capitol. He wears a tailored blue suit with a gold pen tucked in his pocket. As he walks inside, members and staffers gravitate to him. "I'd love to talk to you about some things," one says in his ear.

"Just come on up," Paxon says. He takes a bite of a ham-and-cheese sandwich from the buffet table, then turns and puts his arm around a 25-year-old redhead with freckles on his neck. "Meet the next congressman," Paxon tells the crowd.

The candidate, a state legislator from Florida, leans over and asks Paxon if he could come down for an event. "If there's anything I can do. . . ." Paxon says, removing a business card from his wallet and handing it to him.

Just then the elevator opens and out steps another man who chose K Street over the speakership: former Representative Bob Livingston. Since he resigned from the House last year in the wake of revelations about his extramarital relationships, Livingston has started his own lobbying firm, joining the new K Street establishment Paxon helped create. The two men look at each other, and, for a moment, everyone else in the room looks at them looking at each other.

"Hey, Bill, how's life treatin' you?" Livingston finally asks.

Paxon extends his hand with a smile. "Can't complain," he says. "Can't complain." ■

Stanley Kauffmann on Films Worse Than Hell

DAVID O. RUSSELL'S career, brief as it has so far been, is astonishing. His first film, *Spanking the Monkey* (1994), was a small-scale story that seemed just a sharp comic look at familiar suburban materials until it slithered, shockingly yet comprehendingly, into incest. His next, *Flirting With Disaster* (1996), was a comedy about a man who had been adopted as a child and now was searching for his parents. It was produced somewhat more luxuriously because of the first film's success, but it was still small-scale. The success of the second led, not to a step forward in scope but to a quantum leap. **Three Kings** (Warner Bros.) is, in trade terms, a major picture, large-scale and expensive.

But these are only data. The really remarkable fact is the extension of Russell's abilities. Not many young directors grow so prodigiously from one film to the next. Edward Zwick did it in his move from *About Last Night*... to *Glory*, and a prime instance is Stanley Kubrick's growth from *The Killing*, a compact thriller, to *Paths of Glory*, a bold drama of World War I. Now, in this regard at least, Russell joins the select circle.

Russell, who writes his own screenplays, based *Three Kings* on a John Ridley story. It begins in March 1991, in Iraq at the end of the Gulf War; American troops in the desert are celebrating the cease-fire. Captain Archie Gates and a young woman are celebrating horizontally, but this is only one throb in the outburst of drinking and dancing and general yelping that is going on. Gates and friend are interrupted, and soon thereafter three soldiers bring him a small map that they have extracted from the anus of an Iraqi captive. (All the main characters, including an intrusive female TV correspondent, are labeled with an identifying line on first appearance, much as nineteenth-century theater programs used to do.) In the middle of the jamboree Gates deciphers the map and learns that the Iraqis have buried many millions in Kuwaiti bullion not far away. Considering

where the map was found, we recall Freud's linkage of gold and excrement.

Gates proposes to the three soldiers that they commandeer a vehicle, hurry to the place, snatch the bullion secretly and go home rich. It will be quick and simple, he says. Of course we know that it will not be simple, or the picture would be over in eleven more minutes. (I wonder sometimes why smart characters like Gates, who have surely seen many films, haven't learned from those films that allegedly simple plans, in Burns's words, aft gang a-gley.) Just two of the complications: the TV correspondent suspects something and follows; the U.S. military find out about Gates's expedition and are considerably upset.

But Russell has more in mind than a heist that gets knotted. *Gates* and his three pals—the film's title is odd, despite a reference to the Christmas carol: there are four of them—encounter Iraqi troops loyal to Saddam, along with Iraqi dissidents who were captured and tortured by those troops. The adventure starts as a mad romp, like a latter-day *M*A*S*H*, with laughable discoveries of heaps of electronic appliances and luxe cars that were stolen from Kuwait, but it soon plunges into political complications, with danger and gunfire. The intricacies of Middle East policies and politics are only sketched, almost in comic-book manner; yet they are presented more or less as soldiers might have encountered them. Occasionally one of the Americans says he doesn't really know what the war was about. Later, when one of them is captured by Saddam's Republican Guard, he is forced to drink a cup of oil—motor oil—to prove a point about American intervention.

More troubling than the political roller-skating is the moral evolution of the American group. They begin as a group of pirates—not exactly admirable men, but credible. Then, as the story progresses, they develop conscience. It's easy to believe that, when one of the group is captured, the others make their way back into the heart of danger to rescue

him. But these bullion hijackers then run considerable risks in order to shepherd a group of Iraqi dissidents across the border into Iran, and they give each of the escapees a bullion bar. The American marauders come back with nothing but the trouble they have incurred because of their escapade. Their metamorphosis into ethical grandeur seems ordained by the author because the screenplay lacks clarity of intent. If it was meant to show how self-serving grifters are touched to finer issues, it merely stumbles into that change. A transformation à la Frank Capra wouldn't have helped, but in this screenplay the change in Gates and his group almost seems an afterthought, to sweeten a cynical film.

Still, Russell does so well by his sub-text that the flaws in the text itself become less bothersome. What he is after fundamentally is what Oliver Stone caught in the battle scenes of *Born on the Fourth of July* and almost all of *Platoon*: war is insane. Yes, it is hell, but, what may be even worse, it makes men crazy. I have never been in a war, but I have known plenty who have been, and I have heard. War makes men do things, quite apart from what they are supposed to be doing, that are crazy.

Russell whirls his film along with manifold devices and resources—the shivering explosions of cluster bombs and mines, the slo-mo narcotizing moments, the stop-frame click-click suspensions. (The editing, by Robert K. Lambert, makes us feel that we are floating alongside the action, spinning with its currents.) And underneath all these manifestations is Russell's view: war doesn't happen on earth to human beings. It happens in a different terrain to persons who once were human and will, with luck, get back there. The sharpest instance of this view is when the American prisoner of the Iraqis finds a cell phone in the bunker room and speaks to his wife in their Detroit kitchen who has their baby in her arms. He isn't calling for homey chat: he wants her to report to the authorities where he is. The collision of the two places, the kitchen and the bunker, is not between peace and war but between sanity and insanity.

Two performances stand out. George Clooney, as Gates, shows yet again that he was born to be a leading man in film. He never has to strain to be believable or attractive: he just has to do what he is asked to do and the rest follows. Ice Cube, as one of the Gates group, is solid, likable, earthy. Nora Dunn, as the female correspondent, caricatures a bit, but she conveys a belief that the war has been fought for her and is her property. ■

The million-dollar blarney of the McCourts.

'Tisn't

By R. F. FOSTER

WHAT MAKES A publishing phenomenon—not merely a “best-seller,” but a million-seller, a prize-gatherer, a cult-former, a legend still ensconced in the hardback charts when it goes straight to the very top of the paperback charts? It seems clear that hitting the jackpot requires not so much that people read a book as that “readers” buy a book to satisfy a felt or perceived need. Actually finishing the book may not be necessary. One suspects that very few people know how Stephen Hawking’s *A Brief History of Time*, or Jung Chang’s *Wild Swans*, or Dava Sobel’s *Longitude*, ends.

The jaw-dropping success of those books testifies to the eternal human sense of gratification through self-betterment; mingled, perhaps, with the equally eternal human tendency to console ourselves by reading about the efforts and the tribulations of others. The actual readability of the book, let alone its literary quality, seems comparatively irrelevant—even (or especially) to prize committees. Much of this applies, certainly, to the phenomenon of *Angela’s Ashes*, though there are peculiar variations in this case: the traditional Irish readiness to commercialize the past, for example, and the complex attitude of the United States to what it expects the Irish to be, and the enduring pride and reassurance that Americans find in hot water and flush lavatories.

The paperback edition of *Angela’s Ashes* comes garlanded with pages and pages of ecstatic reviewers’ quotations. Connoisseurs of the genre may note that the heavy-weight names are often there in the guise of kind friends rather than dispassionate critics, but those who nailed their colors to the mast of, say, the *Clarion-Ledger* or the *Detroit Free Press* are no less enthusiastic: “Frank McCourt has seen hell, but found angels in his heart,” “Frank McCourt’s life, and his searing telling of it, reveal all we need to know about being human,” and so on. It may seem like party-pooing to ask

what this kind of bilge actually means (which is less than nothing). It is perhaps fairer to look at the significance of the book itself, and its spin-offs. These now stretch to its sequel, *'Tis*, and the autobiography of Frank’s brother Malachy, *A Monk Swimming*, and a forthcoming film, and the name of at least one pub in Limerick.

Angela’s Ashes began it all. In the beginning it was alternately identified as fiction and as autobiography, but by the time of publication it had settled down as

'TIS: A MEMOIR
by Frank McCourt
(Scribner, 367 pp., \$26)

ANGELA’S ASHES:
A MEMOIR
by Frank McCourt
(Touchstone, 363 pp., \$14)

A MONK SWIMMING
by Malachy McCourt
(Hyperion, 290 pp., \$14)

“a memoir.” It is the sort of memoir in which the protagonist can—like Tristram Shandy—retain absolutely concrete memories from the time of his conception, and retail word-for-word conversations exchanged and letters written from the age of three. Clearly the conventions of magical realism and post-structuralist flannel have had a striking effect on the genre of autobiography. This may be presented as a liberation from the tyranny of the ascertainable fact, but it makes for some confusion as far as the reader is concerned.

Thus (according to *'Tis*) Frank McCourt is born into a poor but feel-good immigrant community in Brooklyn in 1931. There are kind Italian shopkeepers. There are wonderful Jewish neighbors. Father is a sentimental Northern Irish republican who sings rebel ballads, and Mother is the regulation-issue Irish mammy. Cliché is invoked on the very first page of *Angela’s Ashes*, in a way that apparently promises subversion:

Worse than the ordinary miserable child-

hood is the miserable Irish childhood, and worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood.

People everywhere brag and whimper about the woes of their early years, but nothing can compare with the Irish version: the poverty; the shiftless loquacious alcoholic father; the pious defeated mother moaning by the fire; pompous priests; bullying schoolmasters; the English and the terrible things they did to us for eight hundred long years.

But what we hear is exactly what we will get, from the moment the author’s parents leave America. Both go slightly off the rails (drink, depression) when their daughter dies, and they return to Ireland and a cold welcome: first of all in the North, then to the slums of Limerick.

Angela’s Ashes records (or at least reimagines) Frank’s youth in a downward spiral of poverty and immiseration, until he escapes back to America in October 1949, shortly after his nineteenth birthday. (This would actually make him born in 1930: magical realism may have to be invoked again.) It appears from McCourt’s new book that he started using the awful privations of his childhood quite early, in essays at night school at New York University. Certainly the vividness of certain images and events is marvelously realized: the fleas, the mother’s miscarriage, the mentally unbalanced neighbor begging all over Limerick for flour to bake bread for her children before she is taken away to the asylum. The poor are not always mutually supportive.

The father’s Northern background is held against him, Republican though he is: he drinks and comes and goes and eventually goes for good. With incessant rain and the rising river Shannon, the slum floods; and when this happens, the family withdraws to the upstairs room, which they call “Italy.” There is a lot about sex, and even more about dirt, defecation, shared privies in the back lane, and the indignity of emptying chamber pots.

Mam goes to the door and says, Why are you emptying your bucket in our lavatory? He raises his cap to her. Your lavatory, missus? Ah, no. You’re making a bit of a mistake there, ha, ha. This is not your lavatory. Sure, isn’t this the lavatory for the whole lane. You’ll see passing your door here the buckets of eleven families and I can tell you it gets very powerful here in the warm weather, very powerful altogether.

Charity is cold, the kindness of strangers

R.F. FOSTER is the Carroll Professor of Irish History at Oxford, and the author of *Modern Ireland: 1600–1972* (Viking).

is almost non-existent, and the remnant of the family end up living with a repulsive cousin, with whom the passive and exhausted mother is forced to sleep: a step for which her writer sons do not forgive her, then or—apparently—later.

But it all goes on for too long. *Angela's Ashes* is not and will never will be (pace the *New York Times*) "a classic memoir," because its author lacks an internal editor, a sense of developing structure. The language is monotonous and the incidents are repetitive. The characterizations are perfunctory: people are identified by formulaic straplines, which are trundled out again and again each time they appear. One uncle, a jovial cynic, is never introduced without declaring that he doesn't give "a fiddler's fart" for respectable opinion. Still, the level of intellectual give-and-take is reassuringly high, and there is usually a gule at hand to descant on a Cuchulain or a Jonathan Swift:

Next morning, Mr. Timoney says, Wait till we get to *Gulliver*, Francis. You'll know Jonathan Swift is the greatest Irish writer that ever lived, no, the greatest man to put pen to parchment. A giant of a man, Francis. He laughs all through *A Modest Proposal* and you'd wonder what he's laughing at when it's all about cooking Irish babies.

Yeats's invocation to Cuchulain's wife, "great-bladdered Emer," is also surprisingly common currency in the McCourt household.

Angela's Ashes goes on at relentless length, and is actually quite a job to finish. Laboring through it, the reader also begins to feel certain nagging irritations and doubts. One concerns the relation of the text to fact. Frank McCourt has guaranteed in interviews that "all the facts are true," but some incidents surely stretch credulity. The father's claim of an IRA pension, for instance, is presented as a venture into a strange underworld, involving trips to back rooms in seedy suburbs. In Ireland in the mid-1930s, however, these pensions were a matter of strict and official record, done through a

government department, now preserved (though not always accessible) in the National Archives.

Some doubt has also been expressed in Ireland at the likelihood of quite so many boys attending Leamy's School in Limerick in bare feet in midwinter, or of open sewers coursing down the streets; but this may simply be injured local pride. It is certainly hard to credit the urban slum boys, escaped into the countryside, being able to sustain themselves by milking cows in the fields. (The cows even thoughtfully stand still enough for a small child to lie under-

a light and a voice in your head?
'Tis, Dad.

And this uncertain and fantastic element is compounded by an eerie sense that this "memoir" has been recalled through the prism of subsequent reading. There is a fire-breathing priest's sermon to guilt-ridden boys that is straight out of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. There is a doomed love affair with a glamorous sixteen-year-old consumptive girl that is very reminiscent of Micheal MacLiammoir's autobiography, *All for Hecuba* (where it was, given MacLiammoir's redoutably unabashed homosexuality, an even less likely incident). There is an aged female money-lender, for whom the young McCourt writes improbably high-flown dunning letters, who owes a large literary debt to Dostoevsky and Dickens.

Over it all, finally, hovers the inspiration—and the convention—of Sean O'Casey's autobiographies. O'Casey's memoirs are—as his biographers have pointed out—notoriously unreliable as records of his early life, but they were—as McCourt himself notes—the first Irish memoirs to exploit the full potential of childhood deprivation. Of course, O'Casey's background was the tenements of late Victorian Dublin rather than the Limerick of fifty years ago.

In *'Tis*, which follows straight on from *Angela's Ashes*, McCourt describes his education in America.

It a classic subject, but it is disappointingly handled. McCourt does point out, revealingly, that as he began to read more and more omnivorously, situations encountered in great novels seemed to parallel his own experience. He epitomizes the Irish hunger for education, and the Irish reliance on self-supporting communities and aggressive camaraderie, which makes the story of Irish America so cheering. He is also honest—self-deprecatingly so—about the national predilection to seek solace and absolution in alcohol, and its effect on his own marriage, though his first wife remains among the most unreal characters in the book.

McCourt's rise from floor-sweeper and



The Brothers McCourt by Vint Lawrence for The New Republic

neath them, imbibing the milk directly from the udder.)

Our hero also talks regularly to an angel, just as prescribed by Hollywood. This being is strangely conjured up by Frank's father, a bewildering mixture of sensitive soul, good housekeeper, and drunken layabout. The angel materializes on the seventh step of the slum stairs and strengthens Frank's resolve to confess his sins at First Communion. This puts his father straight into self-help counselor mode:

Isn't it better to be able to tell your father your troubles rather than an angel who is

lavatory-cleaner, via a spell as a G.I. in Germany, to high-school teacher and night-school lecturer, is impressive in its own terms. But with the best will in the world, it is not very interesting, and the terrible weaknesses of *Angela's Ashes* also bedevil 'Tis. The characterizations come straight from central casting: the pedophile priest, the angry-but-noble communist, the saintly and paternal black warehouseman. There are encounters that once again strike echoes of other autobiographies. (The inevitable meeting with Billie Holiday is strongly reminiscent of an incident in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.) And the chronological context wavers curiously: McCourt's night-school students in the early 1970s go home to watch Jane Fonda exercise videos, and Irish Americans ask each other in 1958 (eleven years before Northern Ireland erupted) why Catholics and Protestants are at war in "the old country."

MCCOURT'S RETURN VISITS to Ireland betray equally skewed powers of observation and a fuzzy air of anachronism. This is more important than it might seem, because there is some danger that America is ready to believe in Ireland, past and present, as interpreted through the memories of the McCourt family. Malachy McCourt has already got in on the act, with a book which—it is fair to suppose—would never have seen the light of day without his brother's precedent. This is the literary equivalent of the demographic phenomenon known as "chain migration."

From the awkward pun in the title—*Amongst Women*, get it?—to the slack, whoozy, flatulent style, the book is an embarrassment. It is a mediocre and self-adoring account of boozing and weeping and whoring and—intermittently—acting. McCourt himself ran a successful New York bar, after leaving Limerick unable (he says) "to do anything but tell lies." He also went on the stage, and fell an early victim of the curse of minor celebrity and major dipsomania. His tedious memoir is a much more unattractive performance than either of his brother's volumes, as well as a far less literate one. It is maniacally class-obsessed—the New York bourgeoisie show off by "yawning at incomprehensible operas" and "yelping over museums," bad cess to 'em—and violently anti-British. These predictable bigotries are by and large absent even from Frank's somewhat jaundiced worldview.

Still, one of the unintentionally interesting elements in *A Monk Swimming* concerns the author's relationship to the English language. The publishers have the temerity to declare that he "makes the English language do tricks the British

never intended." (Hyperion's editors certainly carry the trick through, allowing a passage in which female lips are "ermined" rather than—presumably—"carmined," the legendary Fleet Street bar El Vino is Americanized as "Alvino's," and a bit from J.M. Synge is quoted in so garbled a form as to be senseless.) McCourt himself believes that the Irish "took a dull tongue, English, and made it roar." Here is a sample of his own roaring:

I averred it was a sight to gladden the eyes, the heart, and the internal organs of any decent man walking the earth this day. "Stop the yap," sez the bould Mitchum, "and get it inside of you." He had done a few movies in Ireland, and therefore knew the lingo, and how it could interfere with the quaffing.

In *A Monk Swimming*, the quaffing has interfered drastically with the lingo. Stage-Irishry leans heavily on a catechism of the tireddest ersatz-English archaisms: almost everything is "ye olde," exchanges are "quoth," things happen "ere long," sex involves "dipping the wick" (though masturbation is "shaking hands with the unemployed"), the author "hies him off" (not often enough), beer is "the chilled amber beverage," Muhammad Ali is "Mr M. Ali of fisticuffs fame," and Jews are "of the Hebraic persuasion."

Malachy McCourt is a professed admirer of J.P. Donleavy and P.G. Wodehouse—neither of them a writer who should be imitated, for exactly opposite reasons. His literary voice comes through as a misheard echo, looking for sympathy and a seat on the bandwagon. From time to time, though, Malachy McCourt's book does convey something of New York in the 1950s and 1960s, as it must have appeared to a healthy and hungry young immigrant: a Manhattan at once intimate and glamorous, pre-crack, pre-Giulani, pre-Tribeca.

BY CONTRAST, ONE of the strange nullities at the heart of Frank McCourt's autobiographies is the lack of a sense of place—outside, that is, the recalled actuality of Limerick. Frank McCourt's Dublin is pure cardboard. There is, for instance, a very odd interlude in the Shelburne Hotel. This is actually an elegant and venerable Irish institution, with something of the atmosphere of the old Biltmore and the establishment cachet of the Plaza; but in Frank McCourt's memory it is transformed into a place where babies' prams are parked outside, and the bar is peopled by yelling Kerry farmers. Similarly, his time in Germany is never described in terms of the place itself.

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In *'Tis*, there is not a single New York institution that is sharply realized, with the possible exception of the Staten Island Ferry. Despite wheeling out the odd mandatory jazzman or bum, this Village in these 1950s could be anywhere. McCourt's memoir carries off neither a Proustian recreation of the past through the writer's perfect internal absorption in it, nor the Isherwood trick of becoming an unblinking camera. The voice in the ear wavers, the focus is off-beam.

And yet it is what millions of people want to read (or at least to buy). It confirms the traditional and comforting belief that the Old World is a sow who devours her own farrow, and everything will eventually come right in America, along with creature comforts, blonde women, and hot running water. It fulfills the stereotype of the Irish as brawlers and boozers, excluded from the effete WASP world, at one with their fellow underdogs, with a tear and a smile always at the ready, and a miraculous way with words—as Malachy McCourt must put it, “warm words, serried words, glittering, poetic, harsh, and even blasphemous words.”

In a moment of unwitting and damning confession, Malachy McCourt also remarks that “they’re all mad in America—they pay you for talking.” But they would probably not pay you very much for talking about the new Euro-Ireland. They probably would not pay you for apostrophizing the efficient, moneymaking, politically ruthless Irish-America that was already broaching the country clubs when the brothers McCourt were invading the saloons, and is by now firmly fixed in the yuppie hierarchy of the Upper East Side.

The true story of the Irish in contemporary America could provide just as inspiring a narrative in its own way, but it conforms less to the comfortable old straitjackets of the stories that have gone before. Evelyn Waugh once remarked that to the Irishman there are only two ultimate realities: hell and the United States. The McCourt version postulates that you have to suffer the first in order to be redeemed by the second. It may be a welcome parable for many, especially to the accountants at Simon and Schuster, but it is very, very far from the whole story. ■

rare among those who become historians. Not born to, but quickly assimilated to, a rather supercilious British establishmentarianism, he was a classical scholar at Cambridge, and in World War I he took one of the positions with the Foreign Office vacated by volunteers for the armed forces, from which he was exempted by bad health. He was a model organizer and presenter of papers, and much involved in the preparations for the Peace Conference, where Russian matters were peripheral but persistent. He opposed Allied support for the anti-Bolshevik forces—not so much out of sympathy for Leninism as on the grounds that it was half-hearted and bound to fail. He remained with the Foreign Office until 1935 (with four years abroad at the British Legation in Latvia).

Carr did not become really interested in Russia until the eve of the 1930s, and then (at first) in such figures as Bakunin and Herzen. His first political book, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, which appeared in 1939, was a major exercise in the application of political “realism” to the European scene in the late 1930s. He argued strongly in favor of the appeasement of Germany, on the grounds that it had recovered from its weakening and its victimization in 1920 and was now strong again, and so must be allowed to establish a suitable hegemony. The states of South East Europe were the main area that Carr allotted to German hegemony. Carr's book also revealed his hostility to the Poles. In his view, they seem to have figured as a continual nuisance, disturbing the balance between serious—because big—centers of power such as Russia and Germany.

Carr's book appeared just as war was declared. In advocating the appeasement of Hitler, he had erred in the most profound way. Superficially, in the rational terms in which he argued, the problem of Germany was tractable. What was missing from Carr's calculations was the central fact that Hitler was unappeasable. This misunderstanding of such motivations continued, in different contexts, to be one of the fatal flaws of Carr's historical and political work.

CARR'S NEXT PUBLIC incarnation (over the war period) was as an editorial writer for the *London Times*. In those days, the anonymous pronouncements of that newspaper were regarded as the voice of the establishment, and up to a point even the voice of official government thinking. The tone, of which Carr was a paragon, might be called magisterial or condescending, depending on one's taste.

Carr was growing increasingly well-

Agit-Prof

By ROBERT CONQUEST

The Vices of Integrity:

E. H. Carr, 1892–1982

by Jonathan Haslam

(Verso, 306 pp., \$35)

E. H. CARR WAS wrong about the major issues of our time, and about some of the minor ones too, but his figure still looms over our historical consciousness, and he certainly merits a good biography. Jonathan Haslam's life of the historian is fine, thorough, well-balanced. The West's pre-eminent scholar in the sphere of Soviet foreign policy under Stalin, Haslam began his academic career as a protégé of Carr's, and he remains loyal to him; but he presents his life and his career frankly and revealingly.

Carr was born in 1892 into what he described as a “middle middle class and very Victorian” family where everything

was secure and normal until his mother fell ill in 1895. Without excess psychotheorizing, Haslam develops the effect of an upbringing conducted largely thereafter by a dominating aunt. Whether as a result of this or not, Carr's three marriages (the middle one was not technically a marriage) saw each wife in turn becoming exasperated by his treatment of them as mere adjuncts to what seems to have been a veritable compulsion to go to his desk and work—a drive that presumably accounts for the immense bulk of his writings. (A mere thousand words a day for three hundred days a year for twenty years means six million words.) And it must be said that some of the women with whom Carr was involved were more interesting than he was.

Haslam makes the striking point that Carr was not much interested in history when he was young, which must be very

ROBERT CONQUEST's new book, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, will be published by Norton in November.

disposed to the Soviet Union; Haslam describes a *Times* editorial that he wrote in 1944 as showing "a degree of optimism that in retrospect seems hopelessly extravagant." His editorial on the fighting in Greece the same year, when British troops prevented a Communist takeover, showed a complete absence of Carr's "realism." For a genuine and consistent realist, the West's entitlement to hegemony in Greece would have been indisputable—and on this issue Stalin himself was, or became, a better Carrite than Carr himself. But Carr argued that EAM, the Communist partisan force, "appeared to exercise almost unchallengible authority" over most of Greece, and was "the largest organised party, or group of parties, in Greece."

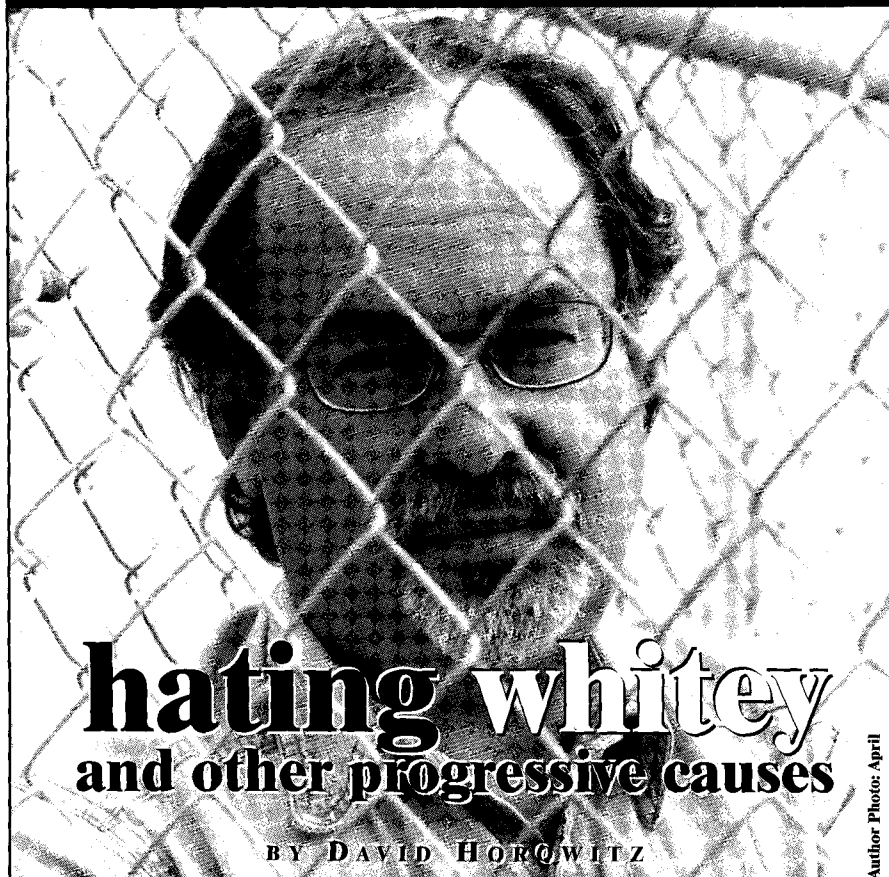
Carr was hotly opposing the policy of his own all-party government, from a platform widely regarded as the voice of sane and solid Britain; and Churchill and his colleagues were naturally infuriated. Haslam takes it that Carr was "initially unaware of the extent to which [EAM] was merely a Communist front." That is to say, he was pontificating on the basis of false data. And much of the London press, represented in Athens by many of the same correspondents who misreported the events in Barcelona seven years earlier, had swallowed the Communist line. It is true that EAM had seized control over wide areas, and crushed or almost crushed the non-Communist partisan forces. But the notion that the Communist forces were widely popular in Greece was quickly negated by their refusal to face elections, and later by their performance in such elections.

Even if Carr had been right about Greece, moreover, his position stood in total contrast to his attitude to the almost simultaneous events in Poland, where the *anti*-Communist resistance really was uniquely well-organized and broadly based. Yet Carr denounced them for their reluctance to accept Soviet control. It is hard to disagree, then, with Haslam's opinion that Carr sided with EAM "instinctively," being "critical of the conservative aims" of the British Government for ideological reasons, or what Haslam sees as "the streak of idealism in him." This "streak of idealism" led Carr to back a particularly vicious totalitarian group. Realism had misled Carr in the 1930s, and idealism was misleading him in the 1940s—and later. This did not affect his self-confidence.

AFTER THE WAR, Carr left the *Times* and started his vast *A History of Soviet Russia*. In the end, this undertaking ran to fourteen volumes, of which the last six come under the heading "Foundations of a Planned Economy,"

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BY DAVID HOROWITZ

Author Photo: April

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taking the reader up to the end of the 1920s. This work is usually regarded as Carr's masterpiece.

So what are we to make of it? It is certainly unrivaled in mere bulk, though many other historians of the period, some of them appearing in Haslam's volume as critics of Carr's views—Bertram Wolfe, Leonard Schapiro, Richard Pipes, Robert Tucker, and Adam Ulam—had broader insight into the Soviet phenomenon. *A History of Soviet Russia* is also impressive in its display of facts or quotations, but it is uncomprehensive in that significant other material is neglected. Carr's work may be considered in its three main aspects: its account of the revolutionary years; its coverage of the struggle for power that followed Lenin's death; and its much lengthier treatment of the events surrounding the adoption and the launching of that "planned economy."

Carr flatly described the events of October 1917 as a "proletarian revolution," with the accompanying thesis that a "bourgeois revolution" could not have led to the much-touted "planned economy." This seems to enlist Carr clearly into the Leninist interpretation of the events, even if we allow for the various reservations that he advanced on non-essentials, and his denial of more than a partial acceptance of Marxism. "It was the masses who drove their hesitating and temporizing leaders further and further down the path of revolution": that is a typical comment of Carr's. The notion that the Bolshevik seizure of power was a "proletarian revolution" is still found in the work of writers who have not studied the facts. The actual seizure of power was not an affair involving the masses at all. It involved only a few thousand participants, mainly disaffected soldiers—unlike the hundreds of thousands who had made the revolution in February 1917.

As for the working class, the more experienced "proletarian" organizations—the railwaymen, the printers, and so on—opposed the Bolsheviks, and after October they pressed for a coalition government. The irregular nature (that is putting it mildly) of the well-financed Bolshevik takeover of often supposititious "workers" Soviets will be familiar to any reader of Richard Pipes's detailed research in *The Russian Revolution*, and of other work in

Another Betrayal

for Paul Bowles

Because of a slip of the moon's mood
against a flat but exotic blue sky,
it began. Never mind the argument,

the exact words. It could be anywhere,
Cairo or Jerusalem, a crumbling city.

Sand and wind. Old passions, predictions.
A slight decision, as if to light
a cigarette, buy a trinket.

It was as simple as that. In the heat,
in the voluminous night,

a paid woman, her beauty chiseled
like the first coin earned
that turns in your hand.

Dizzying and all so strange—
the layers of dress she wore and

the unwinding. A slow movement
as she loosened the top of her robe,
one color slipping to another and another.

It was after she knelt before him,
after he drank from the Judas cup,

everything was set into motion.
A stain not likely to be blotted
from his lips. This moment leading

through cobble stone streets
that wind back to the blank faces

in doorways, to the black snow of flies,
the dust, the sleepless wife, love's
betrayals about to be played out against

the disarrangements of stars,
the old eccentricities of the moon.

Deanna Pickard

the field. But anyone with an ounce of knowledge about Communist methods of taking control even of Trade Unions in the West might have felt a certain skepticism at Carr's reading of the workers and the October revolution.

It is not even true that the Bolsheviks reporting to the Central Committee from working-class districts just before the seizure of power assured it of worker support for its plans. And this was widely known and documented, before Carr even started his work, in the *Minutes of the Central Committee*, which were pub-

lished in Moscow in 1929. (They are well summarized in the English edition of Rafael Abramovich's *The Soviet Revolution*, which appeared in 1962.) In any case, even the pro-revolutionary element wanted a Soviet regime but not a Bolshevik regime.

Such allegiance as the Bolsheviks did secure among the working class was short-lived. The Party did not even win a majority in St. Petersburg in the elections that followed shortly after the seizure of power. And Lenin was soon complaining that even in the Putilov Works, that supposed bastion of Bolshevism, the workers wanted from the new regime what they had wanted from its predecessors, better pay and better conditions.

By May 1918, certainly, the working class had become alienated. The Mensheviks, as losers, are treated contemptuously by Carr, but soon they and the Social Revolutionaries were winning elections in the factories. Only the repressive measures taken against them kept the lid on the resentment of the workers. This discontent with the Bolshevik government culminated in 1921 in the mass unrest in St. Petersburg that was the background of the Kronstadt Rebellion. All this has been documented in detail since Carr's death; but enough evidence to refute his semi-Leninist view was available decades ago.

Carr's volumes and chapters on the struggle for power in the Party after Lenin's death and later are his liveliest and even his fairest. Carr does not conceal his preference for Stalin over Bukharin, but he presents the events and the arguments even-handedly, drawing on the oppositionist sources as freely as those of the victors. This, it appears, is a subject in which he is at home and enjoying himself.

For the data are all concerned, directly or indirectly, with what interested Carr most: power.

Indeed, contrary to the pieties of orthodox Stalinism, Carr demonstrates Stalin's political skills all the more clearly by showing the extent of the challenges that he faced within the Party. Unlike the official Stalinist accounts, Carr does not suppress or misrepresent the activities of the factions that were eventually defeated. Still, his preference is unmistakable. In his character sketches of the leading protagonists, he comes down heavily

in favor of Stalin.

A History of Soviet Russia is overwhelmingly centered on the "Planned Economy" that Carr saw emerging in the Soviet Union. He believed that it represented the direction of the world's future. As scholars more or less in Carr's political camp have pointed out, however, the economic problems of the mid- and late-1920s were misunderstood by the Communist leadership, and were based on thoroughly unreliable statistics. Carr—and even more his collaborator and continuer R.W. Davies—made the best of this refractory material, treating it as carefully and critically as was feasible.

As to the Five Year Plan that was produced, it was not a comprehensive plan at all, but merely a set of targets for various industries. Those targets were then increased time and again. Also there was huge pressure to "overfulfill" the plan; but where would the raw materials for one ambitious sector be found, if not in other "sectors"? Indeed, the successive Five Year Plans never achieved the sought-after economic balances even on paper, let alone in reality.

The professional economists in the Soviet Union were mostly shot in the early 1930s, in two batches—first those who had urged smaller figures, and then those who had accepted the higher figures. But neither the modest targets nor the immodest targets were ever achieved. Recent Russian and Western scholars have shown that the real industrial "increase" in the Soviet Union in the course of the 1930s was about the same as in Germany—though much less efficient. In any case, as one of the best analysts of the matter, the late S. Swianiewicz, put it back in the 1960s, the whole method "was an outcome of the irrational forces which have been released and are not easily to be mastered."

The notion that the best history is written by a historian in sympathy with his subject is a doubtful notion. It has been noted, for instance, that Michelet, whose sympathies were with the Middle Ages and the Revolutionary epoch, wrote best on the intervening despotic monarchy which he detested. Carr's positive view of his subject was hardly helpful; but histories that are to one degree or another misconceived may still be of use if they are read critically, and Carr's monumental series on Russia, read in conjunction with those who took a different view (and wrote shorter books), remains a useful reference work.

Haslam gives a reasonable showing to Carr's critics—to Bertram Wolfe, Leonard Shapiro, Isaiah Berlin, Richard Pipes, and others, whose strictures are a very

necessary corrective. (Pipes, in particular, is far better on the post-revolutionary issues.) Haslam treats Carr's intellectual and personal battles quite fairly. Though usually preserving a calm public persona in these debates, Carr found himself in acute and even bitter disagreement with most of the non-Communist historians and Sovietologists of his time. With Isaiah Berlin, the mutual hostility was intense, the immigrant philosopher warmly defending humane Western values, the English scholar excusing alien despotism. Carr also sharply criticized Karl Popper, and wrote of "the foolish remarks of Popper, Isaiah Berlin, etc. about history in general and revolution in particular." In the Russian field, he similarly attacked most of those mentioned above, together with Hugh Seton Watson, Stephen Cohen, and others.

Carr objected to Cohen's favorable presentation of Bukharin in *Bukharin and the Russian Revolution*, which appeared in 1973. Carr expressed an extremely negative view of Bukharin, describing him (in oddly Stalinist phraseology) as "objectively counter-revolutionary." If Bukharin, or an equivalent figure, had indeed come to power in the post-Lenin years, and rejected the Stalinist project, the Soviet Union might indeed have developed in what Carr and Stalin saw as a

"counter-revolutionary" direction—as it did when the comparable figure of Gorbachev came to power, and a good thing, too. It is only a pity that this "counter-revolutionary" change did not happen earlier. And if we are to use Carr's phraseology, then we could argue that Carr himself was "objectively" Stalinist, to put it at its lowest.

As for Seton Watson, who was eventually recognized as something like the dean of Russian scholarship in the West, Haslam rightly notes that his early work shows a vague Anglo-liberal inclination to pro-Sovietism, but he gave this up after a long investigation in Eastern Europe. I knew Seton Watson slightly at school, and was serving in the Balkans when he made this trip, and so I observed some of his evolution. Academic though he had become, he proved amenable to reality—partly, perhaps, because he had almost perfect Hungarian, Serbo-Croat, and modern Greek. (He denied any mastery of Bulgarian, but he certainly got along in it.) The important thing is that Seton Watson checked his preconceptions against experience, something that Carr (and many others) failed to do.

Haslam skillfully develops Carr's personal and professional relationship with Isaac Deutscher, another partly similar, partly hostile, writer. Deutscher's work,

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though it is less reliable than Carr's in its facts, is more readable. His *Trotsky* is unobjective, and should be seen as a historical drama; and all his work is marred, sometimes absurdly, by his adherence to a Communist (though not a Stalinist) outlook—even if he once expressed the hope that a future Soviet Union would have public statues of both Trotsky and Stalin. Looking, after Deutscher's death, at Deutscher's copy of one of the volumes of his own history, Carr found in Deutscher's handwriting the comment "wherever possible give Stalin the benefit of the doubt." This was, from a Trotskyite point of view, but not only from a Trotskyite point of view, the usual conclusion to be drawn from Carr's pages.

In the later period of his life—he died in 1982—we find Carr persisting in his long-held attitudes. As Haslam notes, he was wrong also about the Soviet leaders having abandoned ideological expansionism—which continued in both practice and theory until the Gorbachev era, and Eduard Shevardnadze's tenure at the Foreign Ministry. But Carr would accept any suitably sponsored "fact." In 1966, for example, he wrote that in India, where "liberalism is professed, and to some extent practiced, millions of people would starve without American charity. In China, where liberalism is rejected, people somehow get fed. Which is the more cruel and oppressive regime?" Of course, the facts of the devastating and state-produced famine a few years earlier, under Mao's Great Leap Forward, were not then available to Western academics. In the past decade, Chinese Communist publications, including long suppressed census figures, have made everything clear; the only remaining question is how many tens of millions suffered. But Carr's assumption was the result of accepting the official Communist accounts—this being no more than a particularly egregious example of this intellectual, or rather unintellectual, prejudice. And then, two years later, at the time of the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, Carr expressed some sympathy with the Czechs, but he resigned them, for "realist" reasons, in effect to the mercy of their German and (as he oddly put it) "Slav" neighbors.

CARR'S WORK HAD two main effects. The first was to give a more favorable impression of the Soviet regime and its potential future than (as Haslam notes) is any longer tenable. The second, which was more important and is less obsolete, was to present a general approach to history, as in his book *What is History?*, which appeared in 1961 and is still read.

In his philosophy of history, as elsewhere, Carr seldom committed himself to a particular position, and he almost always notes his reservations. This seems to have been a matter of temperament. In many cases, it saved Carr from clear categorization. Still, his intellectual motivations, if sometimes contradictory, are fairly plain. Above all, Carr makes rather superficial arguments about the role of accident in history—a touchy point for those of us who believe that if Lenin had been run over by a tram in Zurich in 1916, the course of history would have been fundamentally different.

Carr did not deny that such events had their effects. But even Deutscher took Carr to task for arguing that accidents are outside the general flow of history and that the historian may therefore dismiss them. This hardly appreciates the myriad interweavings of history, where an "accident"—or several accidents—may emerge wholly out of sync with the trend of other events. Moreover, the very division of events into the accidental and the essential is the mark of a closed, or inadequately open, mind making its own tendentious selection.

It blurs, too, the distinction between the world of causation, properly speaking, and the world of free human will—the perennial philosophical problem. It is true that human choices are made under causative restraints. But all the same, there is almost always some leeway in human choice. And to downplay individual motivations and assessments is particularly inept in an epoch in which the totalitarian state has provided the fulcrum by which, as Archimedes said, one man can move the world.

CARR SEVERAL TIMES maintained, and this notion is central to his thought, that the past cannot be understood except from the point of view of the future—the future, that is, as conceived by historians. His abiding conviction, even late in his career, was that the Soviet Union, with all its belatedly noted excesses and blemishes, was on the right track. This was in part because he still saw the planned economy, even in the most Stalinist sense, as the "future," and "industrialization" as the equivalent of coal-and-steel modernization (another lost cause). And he stubbornly held to his hostile points about "bourgeois democracy" as against the proletarian kind. All gone down the plug-hole...

Carr did, for the most part belatedly and inadequately, criticize the inhumanities of the Stalin regime. Yet he continued to object to "moralizing," in the sense of attributing wickedness to Stalin—or even to Hitler. This quality, found these days in

certain sections of academe (who seem to have come to it independently of Carr), is now called being "non-judgmental." But neutrality on such issues is itself a moral stance; and this human failing comes always with a smug affectation of being above the battle.

Carr's view that history is not much interested in the losers has long been criticized as insensitive and uncomprehensive. But the past decade has relegated Carr's favorite winners, the Proletarian Revolution and the Planned Economy, to the status of losers. In terms of both ethics and realism, we must prefer Norman Cohn's remark that "Communism and Nazism have been inspired by fantasies which are downright archaic." And there is also the crucial point, largely missed by Carr, that the decline and fall of Soviet Communism was hastened by the absence of even residual intellectual and political liberty. As Rosa Luxemburg foresaw, this led not only to brutalization but also, and even more destructively, to stultification.

CARR WILL BE remembered, I imagine, as a representative of that elitist and condescending section of British establishmentarianism that was seduced, to one degree or another, by the idea of a planned society regulated, to the benefit of all, by people like themselves. Carr never shook off the progressive notions that were prevalent in the early years of this century—that such a new and better, but above all better organized, social order was just around the corner.

Not that Carr ever became a simple sucker for the Soviets, like the cream of the Fabians and the deans of Western social science, Sidney and Beatrice Webb. And he never quite succumbed to the delusions about Stalin's regime that took in their colleagues Shaw and Wells. As with them, however, one finds in Carr a mixture of establishmentarianism and utopianism. Unlike the true Stalinists and their dupes, who denied the excesses of the period, Carr, in a general way at least, admitted them all—and still he took a positive view of the Soviet phenomenon.

Haslam has given us an interesting, thorough, and (let us add) realistic book. And if we finally see Carr as the writer of massive and useful volumes, and yet defective at a more fundamental level, then our conclusion might be that he was more of a chronicler than a historian. But his chronicle, like all others, contains implicit and explicit judgments; and Carr's hard work should not be allowed to validate those judgments. For proper knowledge does not necessarily imply proper judgment. Lord Kingsborough, who knew most about Central American antiquities

in the early part of the nineteenth century, and devoted his life and his fortune to the magnificent nine-volume *Antiquities of Mexico*, believed them to be the work of the Lost Tribes of Israel. It was a hostile colleague who adapted, perhaps a little unfairly, the rhyme from Winnie-the-

Pooh:

*Carr was a chap of enormous brain.
Just say it again.
Of enormous brain.
Of enormous what?
Well he wrote a lot. ■*

A Necessary Good

By ALAN WOLFE

A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government by Garry Wills

(Simon and Schuster, 343 pp., \$25)

FOR A SOCIETY that constantly changes, America has a remarkable capacity to stay the same. One thing that never seems to alter is a deep distrust of government. Forget, for the moment, that America at the end of the twentieth century, compared to America at the end of the eighteenth century, is populated by people from all over the world and not just from the British Empire and Africa; and is dominated by global capital rather than by the cycles of agricultural production; and is linked together by new technologies and not separated by impossible distance; and extends rights to all its citizens, not to a privileged few. All those discontinuities notwithstanding, pronouncements made by anti-Federalists such as Patrick Henry or radical individualists such as Henry David Thoreau to the effect that centralized power in Washington is evil could just as easily have been made by Republican isolationists in the 1940s, or leftist student radicals in the 1960s, or Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, or militia members now.

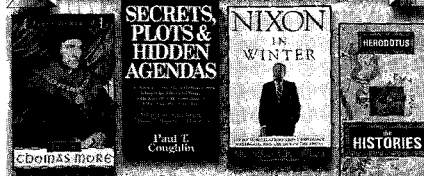
What explains this peculiar preference for weak government, even as government in this century has defeated foreign aggressors, kept the peace, spent us out of depression, built the country's infrastructure, established the rules of capitalist competition, transformed (much for the better) the last years of life, provided a modicum (now almost completely disappeared) of intelligent programming on television, brought water to the desert, improved agricultural efficiency, and guaranteed some sort of safety net for the worst off? This is the question which Garry Wills tries to answer in his new book. He fails to provide a convincing explanation for a paradox that has defied

nearly every commentator on the American scene, but he offers an important corrective to the myths that motivate our incipient anarchists (who are often to be found in the precincts of radical conservatism). He also proposes an intriguing argument for why any good society requires a government capable of acting in the public interest.

Political ideologies are like templates. Their fundamentals are not really ideas so much as they are wisps of ideas: brief fragments, the mere mention of which, as in the techniques of word association, immediately conjure up statements of principle to be defended at all costs. The anti-governmental template, according to Wills, contains the following terms: provincial, amateur, authentic, spontaneous, candid, homogenous, traditional, populist, organic, religious, voluntary, and participatory. You can find them assembled in a movie by Frank Capra or in John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*.

The American hero wants only to get on with his private life, which he finds perfectly satisfying. Usually he can do just that; but on occasion he will be called—against his inclination—to governmental duty. There he finds people committed to values entirely different from his own: they are cosmopolitan experts, adept at talking among themselves in a language that few others can understand while serving the interests of the elite who pay them for their attention. His incorruptible integrity eventually wins the day, but not much more than that, for he has the sense, as he departs once again for private life, that the minute he leaves, government will be back in the hands of the crooks and the interests.

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Wills's book provides a catalogue—and catalogue descriptions—of all those who, throughout the course of American history, have subscribed to this ideology. They include nullifiers such as John Taylor of Caroline, the subscribers to the Hartford Convention, and John C. Calhoun, all of whom argued that local government can take precedence over national edicts. For Wills, nullifiers stop one step short of those who advocate secession. Both rely on the same ideology. Before, during, and even after the Civil War, apologists for the South used all the terms affiliated with the anti-governmental template. "The North," Wills writes, "is seen as impersonal, mechanical, efficient—the very things resented in central governments. The South is seen as spontaneous, traditional, organic—it liked to picture its war as a repeat of Washington's with England, local minutemen up against the disciplined forces of empire."

Closely connected to the nullifiers and the secessionists are the insurrectionists: Daniel Shays, the participants in the Whiskey Rebellion, and John Brown. More spontaneous and amateurish than professional revolutionaries—most of the latter become strong statist, if they succeed—insurrectionists launch inevitably hopeless attacks against symbols of governmental authority. They are, Wills adds, the direct opposite of vigilantes, another group attracted to the anti-government cause. The former attack government as too repressive, the latter attack it as not repressive enough.

Two other categories round out Wills's list of anti-government crusaders in American history. There are the withdrawers and there are the disobeyers. The withdrawers—such as Henry Adams, Albert J. Nock, Henry David Thoreau, and H. L. Mencken—take a principled position that "contact with government sullies one's own purity." Highly individualistic, their protests, like those of the insurrectionists, are not meant to be effective or even persuasive to others. That is why they differ so much from the disobeyers, figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., who selectively break laws as a way of leading a mass movement for social change. Wills points out, quite correctly, that while King expressed his admiration for Thoreau, the two were worlds apart: Thoreau was prissy and contemptuous of ordinary people, while King was inclusive and inspirational. No wonder that the one led a successful attack on the government in the segregated South while the other was happy in his self-imposed isolation.

Despite the presence of so many anti-governmental principles throughout the course of our history, Wills observes, most of those adhering to them still feel the

need to invent validating myths about the American Revolution and the adoption of the Constitution. He has particular fun with the notion, advanced by the adherents of contemporary militias, that since we required a revolutionary war to win our independence, we have always been a country in which citizens were quick to take up arms against injustice. Actually, he points out, during the Revolution there were not many weapons around, and draft evasion was frequent, and discipline was close to non-existent. Where the militias were successful, moreover, it was to keep order among their fellow citizens.

The myths spun about the Constitution in defense of anti-government ideology are no more persuasive. For the Constitution was written for the express purpose of overcoming weak and ineffective government in the states. The three branches of government were not created equal. The Bill of Rights was not adopted to placate the Anti-Federalists and thereby to undermine the victory of centralizers such as Madison and Hamilton. The case for weak government relies, then, on an underground version of American history, one that never actually happened but nonetheless serves to inspire those committed to pursuing the anti-government cause today.

THE ANTI-GOVERNMENTAL cause in our own day is clearly on Wills's mind throughout his book. Each American tradition of belief in the evils of centralized power, he argues, has a contemporary equivalent. Withdrawers such as Thoreau inspired hippies and rural communes, and (though Wills does not mention him) the seemingly principled refusal of Edmund Wilson to pay his taxes in protest against the Cold War. The vigilante spirit lives on in the anti-anti-gun campaigns of the National Rifle Association. Anti-abortion protestors have adopted both the non-violent tactics of Martin Luther King Jr., and the insurrectionary fantasies of John Brown. (Had he read any history, Timothy McVeigh would also have compared himself to John Brown.) It is hard to find advocates of secession in America today, and Wills cites none; but all the other categories are well represented.

Wills is a gifted rhetorician. He writes so skillfully, and in such a reasonable way, that the reader is led along in agreement—until one reaches a point at which common sense is left behind. For me, the point comes when Wills stops by the Yale Law School. There he finds Bruce Ackerman, whom he immediately cites as an example of a contemporary nullifier. Now it is true that Ackerman is not one of those who believes that the Constitution was set in

stone, never to be changed except through the detailed procedures for amendments set out in Article V. And his belief in the fluidity of the Constitution can put Ackerman into strange company. Defenders of the Southern way of life like to point out the illegitimate ways in which the Southern states were coerced into ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment, just as conservatives argue that the New Deal represented an illegitimate usurpation of power unintended by the Founders.

Ackerman has no problem with such arguments, except for the presumed illegitimacy. In his view, the Constitution has been amended without relying on its specified amendment procedure whenever "we, the people" exercise plebiscitary powers to force new constitutional understandings into existence. Reconstruction and the New Deal were both as close as America comes to situations in which normal procedures are suspended, resulting in major constitutional modification. For Wills, Ackerman's argument represents a strain of nullification because it implies that people are correct to assume that existing laws and procedures are without authority. He finds—as do I—a kind of romantic worship of authentic democracy in Ackerman that has more in common with Jefferson than with the practical realism of Madison and Hamilton.

But how much does Ackerman in reality overlap with John C. Calhoun? Both were critical of the Constitution, and wrote treatises outlining new theories of government; but a thought-experiment whose purpose is to strengthen the capacity of the national government by simultaneously strengthening the powers of ordinary people is not a call for a fundamental reconstruction of the Union born out of a desperate attempt to limit the capacity of the national government by restricting the powers of the people. Nor does it make sense to include Ackerman among those anti-governmentalists who worship spontaneity and amateurism. Ackerman, after all, is a law professor at an elite university whose ideas on this subject are dense and cumbersome. His political instincts may be populist, but surely populism ends where arcane theory begins.

AND WILLS HAS more business at Yale. He also dwells on the ideas of Akhil Reed Amar, citing him as a supporter of jury nullification. Amar, like Ackerman, is a romantic who wants to strengthen those occasions when "the people" take power into their own hands. And he believes that the Constitution gives them the opportunity to do so not only through the ballot box, but through the cartridge box and the jury box as well. Jury nullification, Amar writes, "rep-

resents a vision of popular sovereignty—the triumph of community values over overreaching governmental officials.” Such statements do indeed resonate with an old American mistrust in government, so one can understand why Wills is tempted to include Amar in his bestiary.

The trouble is that there really are jury nullificationists in American law schools, and Amar is among the more moderate of them. Amar himself does not discuss the ideas of Paul Butler, the law professor who has written in defense of the notion that black jurors should acquit black defendants whenever possible, on the grounds that the criminal justice system is irredeemably stained with racism. But Amar provides enough of an argument to make clear why he would disagree with Butler. Amar is a democrat, and he recognizes that laws which have popular support ought not to be ignored by twelve people merely because they do not like the law, including those laws—which are often very popular—that black Americans may find especially directed against them. That is why he thinks the O. J. Simpson jury was wrong to listen to Johnnie Cochran’s argument that they ought to send a message. It is the job of legislatures to send such a message. Yet the jurors of Oliver North or Bernard Goetz were right to dismiss charges because in those cases they became active citizens, interpreting the context of the application of the law as good citizens should interpret it.

Wills is correct to criticize Amar’s attempts to make such distinctions, for it is not always possible to know the motives of jurors. Still, this is not the criticism that really matters. Amar’s reasons for believing that the Simpson jury acted improperly in substituting their own views for the views of the people suggests that radical democrats trust government too much, not too little. In *The Cost of Rights*, Cass Sunstein and Stephen Holmes recently argued convincingly that the protection of rights requires strong governmental authority. If this is so, then the greater the extent to which Amar wants to see rights

extended—even rights to a “lunch box,” typical welfare state policies, that would add to the other boxes that he discusses—the greater the degree to which he becomes a defender of the state. Popular government is still government.

Timothy McVeigh is undoubtedly an insurrectionist. But is Sanford Levinson? Levinson, a law professor at the University of Texas, is—along with Amar and others—classified by Wills as an “academic insurrectionist.” This is because Levinson is one of the most articulate advocates of the idea that the Second Amendment

and Wayne LaPierre.

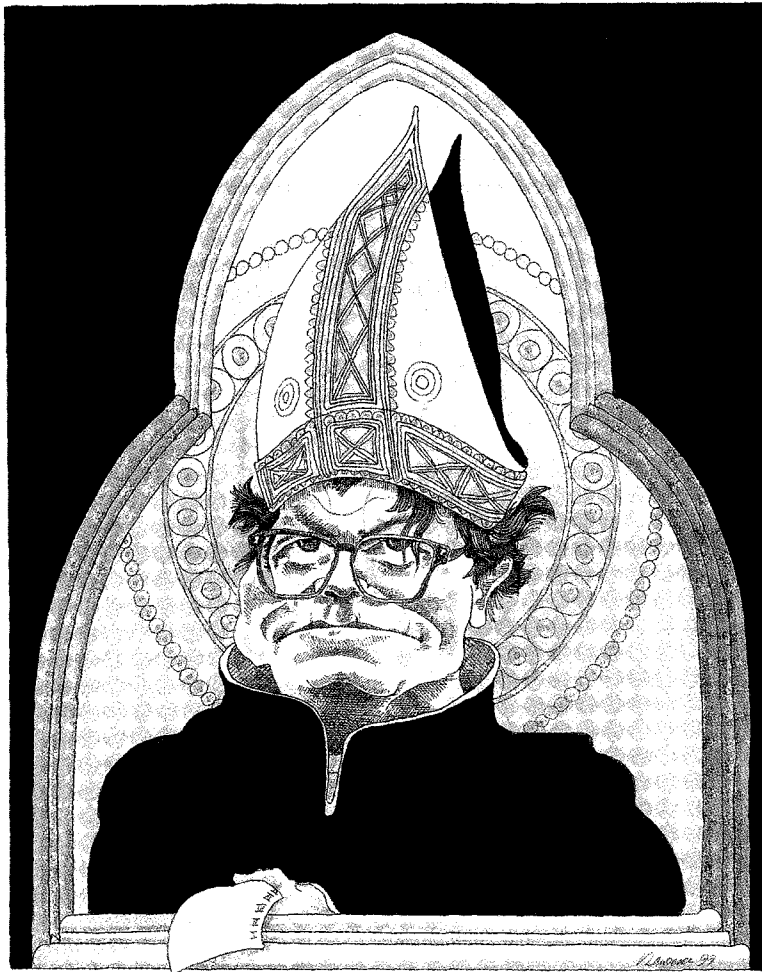
WILLS ENDS HIS book by arguing that government is a necessary good; but he has a reason of his own. Liberals admire government because it is viewed as essential for achieving predetermined ends, while conservatives distrust government because they view it as invasive of individual freedom. Wills wants to change the nature of that debate.

In his critical discussion of the constitutional myths associated with the anti-government cause, Wills argues rightly that James Madison’s underlying philosophy of government was Kantian. When Madison famously wrote that “if men were angels, no government would be necessary,” he meant that if human beings were not by nature driven toward faction, they would not require a mechanism to expand their horizons. It is because they tend to be parochial that they need government to become cosmopolitan. The best thing to be said about government is that it shows us a larger world that, under the influence of our passions, we would otherwise be disinclined to see.

For that reason, government, in Wills’s account, is not all that different from religion, since, for those who believe in God, the realm of the supernatural offers them a similar vision of an expanded horizon beyond the mundane concerns of everyday life.

One need not be a religious thinker, according to Wills, to appreciate this truth. David Hume, a notorious skeptic, believed that society brings about a realm of affection and benevolence that stands in sharp contrast to solitude and withdrawal.

It is bit much, I think, to argue, as Wills does, that for Hume “the state makes love itself possible.” One may make the case, as Wills also does, for Augustine; but it is a long road from the *Confessions* to compulsory seat belt laws, and Wills is wrong, and a little perverse, to travel down it. “Would it be going too far,” he asks, “to say that rules of the road foster the social affections that Hume and St. Augustine spoke of?”



Garry Wills by Vint Lawrence for The New Republic

really means what it says: it gives American citizens the right to keep and bear arms. On the substance of this argument, I find myself, again, on Wills’s side; he is right, I believe, to criticize Levinson for attending too much to the more romantic rhetoric of eighteenth-century political debate and too little to the practical, state-building side. Yet calling Levinson an insurrectionist is wildly off the mark. He is an eclectic and complex legal scholar who follows arguments in unexpected directions. That this has led him to a position that overlaps at points with the rhetoric of the National Rifle Association does not make him a comrade of Charlton Heston

Yes, I think it would. As much as one might appreciate Wills's attempt to move beyond stale debates over government, turning to theology is not the way to go. A government that found itself in the transcendental business of saving souls would be a government that reached well beyond the limits on its power that were rightly written into the Constitution of the United States.

Wills himself offers one reason to fear his own thought-experiment. Early in his book, when he introduces the basic sets of values that differentiate the anti-governmentalists from their opponents, he includes religious ones among the former. Like many of Wills's categories, this is not fully persuasive: Jefferson, a Deist at best, was also capable of extreme anti-governmental mutterings, while American Catholics—surely among the most religious of Americans—have usually been advocates of a strong state. Still, if Wills believes in his own categories, it is odd that he would stand his case for government on ground usually claimed by opponents of government. Wills writes of the "blessings of government." In so doing, he runs the risk of asking too much from it, which can only result in greater disappointment if government fails to deliver.

Wills is on much stronger ground when he writes that "government plays a limited role in human activity, and it should have the aspects suited to its limits," an appropriate enough warning against his own Augustinianism. That is why we are better off talking of benefits than blessings. Government, in a democracy, is the best way to achieve the relatively mundane goals we require as a collectivity while keeping the invasions of our individual rights to a minimum.

EVEN WHEN IT is formulated in minimalist terms, the case for government will almost certainly fail to persuade those whose attacks on government seem to define their very purpose for being. I know of no other country in which a proposal to pay the nation's chief executive a somewhat higher salary—but one still far below the compensation of heads of organizations far smaller and less momentous—arouses so much passionate opposition. While no one has offered a satisfactory explanation of why anti-governmental ideas are so powerful in America, there is a cause that has not been considered. It is that the power of the anti-governmental tradition in America is owed to the fact that, in America, government works.

If the National Rifle Association did not believe that government could, if it really wanted to, ban hand guns, it would not need to spend millions lobbying against

the prospect. Every time that government actually produces a benefit for some, it arouses the ire of others. It makes perfect sense, then, that the astonishing success of government in the twentieth century would be accompanied by the spread of an anti-governmental ideology.

Anti-governmental forces have often been the losing forces in American history, which is another reason to question Wills's efforts to find the descendants of Calhoun in the law schools. All those nullifiers and withdrawers would be perfectly happy with government if it were *their* government. Anti-governmentalists claim to speak for freedom and spontaneity, but they are usually incipient authoritarians, their fury directed not at the fact that order is imposed on the world, but on

the fact that others besides themselves are imposing the order. They are merely bad losers, and it is out of resentment that they try to bring the whole thing down.

Even powerless anti-government ideologies can be dangerous, for their very rejection of the political world around them breeds the particular kind of irresponsibility associated with back-seat driving. Wills is right to take them seriously, for they not only kill people, they also poison the atmosphere of civic life. As he suggests, we cannot love our country and hate its only significant manifestation. Yet we also need to remember that in our politics, as in our Westerns, there are always winners and losers; and we are fortunate that the bad guys have lost most of the time. ■

Modern Love

By ADAM KIRSCH

The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse
edited and with an introduction
by Daniel Karlin

(Penguin, 851 pp., \$17.95)

I.

IF IT IS true that, even today, it is impossible to read Victorian poetry neutrally—alert to its beauties and benignly neglecting its faults, as we would read the poetry of any earlier period—it is because we are, even today, too close to it. It has not yet moved out of living and embattled history and into indifferent historiography. When we read a bad poem of the seventeenth century, we are likely to say that it is a failed attempt, or simply dull:

Now sure, within this twelve-month past
I've loved at least some twenty years or
more:

The account of Love runs much more fast
Than that, with which our Life does
score:

So though my Life be short, yet I may
prove
The great Methusalem of Love.

Not that Love's Hours or Minutes are
Shorter than those our Being's measured
by:

ADAM KIRSCH writes frequently about poetry for THE NEW REPUBLIC.

But they're more close compacted far,
And so in lesser room do lye.
Thin airy things extend themselves in
space,
Things solid take up little place.

Here, in "Love and Life," Abraham Cowley was employing a standard device of Metaphysical poetry—a paradoxical conceit, worked out so that it makes sense in some unexpected way—but he was employing it poorly: there is not enough surprise in the initial statement, and not enough ingenuity in the working-out. We feel that we are seeing a poem going through its motions. Yet we are not likely to say, on account of this, that Metaphysical poetry as a whole is arid and unimaginative, offensively blind to its own weaknesses, and generally not worth reading.

The reaction is different, I think, when we read something like this:

I looked out into the morning,
I looked out into the west:
The soft blue eye of the quiet sky
Still drooped in dreamy rest;

The trees were still like clouds there,
The clouds like mountains dim;

The broad mist lay, a silver bay
Whose tide was at the brim. . .

I looked out into the morning
Looked east, looked west, with glee:
O richest day of happy May,
My love will spend with me!

It is possible to be almost angry with James Thomson, the poet who produced "Sunday Up the River," for rehearsing the usual Victorian errors: clumsy imagery (is the "eye of the sky" the sun, in which case it wouldn't be "blue," or is it the sky itself, in which case it does not resemble an eye?); soft-headed escapism ("drooped in dreamy rest"); metronomic, senseless rhythm; sentimental outbursts ("O richest day")—in all, a falseness to real diction, real landscape, and real emotion.

THE VICTORIANS CAN be not just bad, but embarrassingly bad; but we are only embarrassed by those to whom we feel close—most notably, by our parents. And the Modernist reaction to Victorian poetry, which still largely directs our own reading of that poetry, is the reaction of an embarrassed adolescent, trying to disown his parents through a casualness verging on cruelty. Reading the essays of Eliot and Pound, it is striking how much of the work of disaffiliation is done not through close criticism and argument, but simply through attitude:

As for the nineteenth century, with all respect to its achievements, I think we shall look back upon it as a rather blurry, messy sort of a period, a rather sentimentalistic, mannerish sort of a period. I say this without any self-righteousness, with no self-satisfaction.

Pound's lack of self-satisfaction is patently self-satisfied. So is Eliot's dismissal of Tennyson and Browning in "The Metaphysical Poets": they "are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose." What exactly it would mean to "feel one's thought" so immediately seems to require some elucidation; but the substance of the charge is less important than the casual tone in which it is made.

It is easy to see the break between the Victorian period and the Modernist period in which we still live, at least poetically. We value precision, ordinary language, and self-conscious emotion; we take it for granted that our poems will have an urban or suburban setting, and not take place in some rural or fairy wonderland; we have little use for mythological personages, except when they are used with irony; and we are more inclined to distrust than to embrace meter and

rhyme. This is a real and significant difference, and it should not be discounted. Perhaps the signal achievement of Modernism in English verse was to move poetic diction closer to actual diction. As Eliot says in his essay on Tennyson, clearly with an eye to his own work, poetry periodically requires "radical changes through which [it] will curve back again to its norm."

But is the spirit of Victorian poetry, at least some of it, really so different from our own spirit? There is a great deal of Victorian poetry that will seem surprisingly "modern" to readers accustomed to think of that poetry as "Come into the garden, Maud/For the black bat night has flown"—including some of Tennyson's own poetry. And the Victorian method of dealing with personal and philosophical sorrow is in important ways superior to the Modernist method—embracing sincerity instead of irony, melancholy instead of theatrical despair. Indeed, understanding Victorian poetry today may well be a way to redeem sincerity and melancholy as legitimate poetic modes, and to show us how these subjects may be dealt with in a way that is intellectually honest and artistically satisfying.

II.

DANIEL KARLIN'S NEW anthology of Victorian poetry is an excellent starting point for such an understanding. It cannot be said that this was his purpose in assembling the book; indeed, his point is precisely not to make a point. He wishes to be fruitfully miscellaneous. His *Penguin Book of Victorian Verse* is no one's idea—not even, one suspects, his own idea—of a perfect anthology, one that would preserve the best work of the period. Instead, and in keeping with the contemporary ethos of literary studies, Karlin is out to challenge our idea of a master narrative:

The general notion that an anthology should be "representative" usually conceals a set of particular assumptions about the constituency being represented, and, in the case of Victorian poetry, may come down to the issue of whether Arnold should be given more space than Swinburne, or whether Elizabeth Barrett Browning merits as much attention as her husband. The idea that a truly representative anthology of Victorian poetry might be interpreted as meaning the poems of Ellen C— and Tristram [two bad and unknown poets discussed earlier] simply doesn't figure. Yet it is arguable that such poetry—the poetry of the commonplace, of received ideas and derivative language, of conven-

tional religious and ethical sentiment . . . is indeed *representative* of what the Victorians wrote and read, just as it would be, *mutatis mutandis*, of the writing and reading of other periods, including our own.

After reading this in the introduction—along with Karlin's confession "to an indiscriminate taste for Victorian light verse"—one might justifiably be afraid of what is to come. But Karlin's theoretical bark is worse than his bite. His collection does include many "representative" bad poems, but it also has room for some valuable poems that usually do not make it, at least in their entirety, into period anthologies. It would be hard to say that an anthology that allows 42 pages to Arthur Hugh Clough, 37 pages to James Thomson, and only 10 pages to Algernon Swinburne is an ideal introduction to the period; and since this book is likely to be the only Victorian anthology in many bookstores, this is an important concern. Still, it isn't hard to find Swinburne elsewhere, while it is close to impossible to find complete Clough's "Amours de Voyage" and Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night," two extremely interesting long poems that are well worth reading. If only for this reason, Karlin's anthology is a valuable one.

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF *Victorian Verse* is arranged chronologically by the birth year of the poet, beginning with Wordsworth and ending with Belloc. In his introduction, Karlin suggests two possible ways to divide its contents: light versus dark verse, and speech versus song-like poems. But a better organizing principle, I think, would divide these poems into three categories.

First, there are the famous poems by the famous poets: "The Charge of the Light Brigade," "Dover Beach," "My Last Duchess," and so forth. In fact, there are fewer of these anthology-pieces in Karlin's book than one might expect, and many regrettable absences: only one poem from Tennyson's "Maud" (that "black bat night" again); no "Bishop Blouhram's Apology"; neither Arnold's "The Buried Life" nor his "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse"; and examples could be multiplied. These are the poems that summarize, if that is possible, the sensibilities and the styles of the major poets; they are the "canon," though they may not be the poems that we like best today. It is possible not to be interested in Tennyson's sound-effects, to see them (as Whitman did) as merely empty verbalism; but any Victorian anthology has to show why Tennyson was a master of sound-effects:

The woods decay, the woods decay and
fall,
The vapours weep their burthens to the
ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies
beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.

The only poet who seems to me unfairly promoted into this canonical group, alongside Tennyson and Browning, is Christina Rossetti, who is second only to those two in the number of pages allotted. Rossetti is by no means a bad poet; she is often careful, intelligent, with a good historical sense and a distinctive rhythm. Her religious poems are, with Hopkins's, almost the only serious Victorian poems that forthrightly refuse agnosticism. But to give her more than fifty pages in this anthology, while Swinburne and Hardy each have ten and Hopkins only five, is seriously to misjudge her poetic value.

A LARGE PART OF the reason for Rossetti's ascension is, perhaps, her gender; but she is also tailor-made for deconstructive readings. Her poem "Goblin Market," included here in full, is a Derridean dream: ostensibly a fable about the power of sisterly love, it is also quite obviously throbbing with repressed sexuality, and it is never exactly clear how much of that sexuality the poet intends to be there. It looks like a textbook case of the signified outstripping the signifier. At the end, after sister Lizzie has rescued sister Laura from her enchantment by the cursed goblin-fruit, we find the superego's neat moral:

For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen while one stands.

Earlier in the poem, however, we have read this description of Lizzie resisting the goblins' effort to feed her their fruits:

Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syruped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin....

And this scene, where Laura is cured of her enchantment by licking that juice off Lizzie's face:

"Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,

Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me...."

One can easily understand why, to a certain school of literary criticism, "Goblin Market" is everything a poem should be: sexually fraught, potentially feminist, and deeply at odds with itself. But that does not mean that it is a good poem. In parts, it is risibly bad—empty doggerel that seems to be writing itself:

Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries....

This catalog of fruits goes on for many more lines.

Karlin also makes room for a fourteen-sonnet sequence that palely ventriloquizes Dante and Petrarch: the attraction here is that it is written as an imagined female reply to those courtly lovers, from the Beatrice/Laura standpoint. Others of the poems included have an intense sadness verging on wildness, which goes beyond the standard Victorian melancholy (and is also notable in the poems of the Brontës), and are interesting for that reason. Yet Rossetti's style is never especially interesting or complex, and frequently exhibits exactly that "derivative language" that Karlin discusses in his introduction:

I wish I were a little bird
That out of sight doth soar;
I wish I were a song once heard
But often pondered o'er,
Or shadow of a lily stirred
By wind upon the floor,
Or echo of a loving word
Worth all that went before,
Or memory of a hope deferred
That springs again no more.

It is only a matter of time before the reputation of the author of such lines will be restored to its proper modesty.

THE SECOND CATEGORY in Karlin's anthology is comprised of deliberately anti-canonical poems: poems of protest, social or political or literary, or poems that incompetently imitate the canonical poets, and thus taint them by association, or poems that are children's verse or light verse, or poems that are simply bad. Few would read them for their literary value. They are not beautiful or innovative or strikingly true; but they do, as Karlin intends, give us some sense of

what it would have been like to read Victorian poetry as a Victorian.

We do not need to cast back a hundred years, of course, to find a period in which the bad poets outnumber the good. Still, it is still valuable to be reminded that Victorian poetry is more (or, perhaps, less) than Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne. Much poring over archives must have been required to find poems such as George Outram's "The Annuity," from a book called *Legal Lyrics and Metrical Illustrations of the Scotch Forms of Process*, which manages to find no fewer than eighteen rhymes for the word "annuity":

I read the tables drawn wi' care
For an Insurance Company;
Her chance o' life was stated there
With perfect perspicuity.
But tables here or tables there,
She's lived ten years beyond her share,
An's like to live a dozen mair,
To ca' for her annuity.

There are a number of poems on the plight of the workers, none of them interesting beyond their value as historical documents:

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

Others, a related group, take to verse to comment on the advance of technology, usually with dismay. J.K. Stephen, a cousin of Virginia Woolf, is ironically enthusiastic about American know-how:

Republic of the West,
Enlightened, free, sublime,
Unquestionably best
Production of our time.

The telephone is thine,
And thine the Pullman Car,
The caucus, the divine
Intense electric star....

But every now and then,
It cannot be denied,
You breed a kind of men
Who are not dignified,

Or courteous or refined,
Benevolent or wise,
Or gifted with a mind
Beyond the common size,

Or notable for tact,
Agreeable to me,

Or anything, in fact,
That people ought to be.

And then there are the epigones, who deform Wordsworth and Tennyson into period junk:

O deep unlovely brooklet, moaning slow
Thro' moorish fen in utter loneliness!
The partridge cowers beside thy loamy
flow
In pulseful tremor, when with sudden
press
The huntsman flusters thro' the rustled
heather.

Augusta Webster, the author of a sonnet sequence of outstanding mediocrity called "Mothers and Daughters"—included here in full, and even mentioned with pride on the back cover—is perhaps the doyenne of this group:

'Tis but a child. The quiet Juno gaze
Breaks at a trifle into mirth and glow,
Changed as a folded bud bursts into blow,
And she springs, buoyant, on some busy
craze....

All these poets add nothing to the luster of Victorian poetry, and some of them do their best to tarnish it; and by including them Karlin seems not just to be making a point about what is "representative," but also indulging a taste for kitsch. Just as the paintings of the pre-Raphaelites have recently come into vogue for their camp value, so Karlin—who in his introduction refers to some bit of verse as "enjoyably bad"—seems to be encouraging us to sample the pleasures of condescension toward the past. Here again we see how the Victorians remain potent adversaries of the present: while including bad poets in a seventeenth-century anthology would seem simply pointless, in this case it confirms our prejudices, and thus our sense of superiority. Only a period to which we feel anxiously close can be enjoyably mocked.

III.

IT IS THE third category of poems that is most intriguing and fruitful for a contemporary reader. In these poems, what we usually think of as Victorian poetry—a sonorous haven from real life, a make-believe world of Greek gods and Arthurian knights and babbling brooks—is completely reversed. In these remarkable poems, poets discuss, in an elevated but still authentic diction, and with surprisingly "modern" frankness, the concerns and fears and sorrows that are still actually ours.

Auden observed about Tennyson that

"there was little about melancholy that he did not know; there was little else that he did." The same judgment could easily be made on the period as a whole. Virtually every major Victorian poet writes about melancholy, whether it is associated with death and the fear of death, the failure of religious belief, or lost love. When Pound wrote that the nineteenth century was a "sentimentalistic" period, or when Auden wrote that Edward Lear "hid tears like dirty postcards in a drawer," they were lampooning this side of Victorian poetry: the mawkish enjoyment of one's own sorrow. Certainly, Karlin's anthology shows that, like any stereotype, this one rests on fact. One finds a self-delighting sadness in every important poet, from Tennyson ("Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean") and Browning ("The Poet's age is sad: for why?"), to Swinburne ("We are born with travail and strong crying,/And from the birthday to the dying/The likeness of our life is thus") and Lear:

There was an Old Man of Cape Horn,
Who wished he had never been born;
So he sat on a chair,
Till he died of despair,
That dolorous Man of Cape Horn.

And when sorrow becomes such an

evident pleasure, it is easy to dismiss the Victorians' melancholy as mere sentiment, costing no real pains. It is the effort to dissociate themselves from this trivial sorrow that leads the Modernist poets so to emphasize their own despair, to give it a hallucinatory jaggedness:

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms.

Yet there is more to Victorian melancholy than stylized sentiment. Indeed, the third category of poems in Karlin's anthology are those in which the Victorians attain to an honesty of self-diagnosis, a harsh authenticity, that we do not necessarily expect from them, and that calls to mind the "confessional" poetry of our century. I would include in this group some well-known poems—"In Memoriam," "Sonnets from the Portuguese," "Modern Love," much of Arnold and Hardy—and some lesser known ones, especially Clough's "Amours de Voyage." It is the greatest merit of Karlin's anthology that he makes room for these poems in their entirety—or at least, in the case of "In Memoriam," provides generous excerpts.

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In the four poems that I have named, all of them sequences of some length, the length is an integral part of their effect. Parts of "In Memoriam" can be read as free-standing lyrics, such as the famous "Ring out, wild bells"; but it is the extensiveness of the poem, its diaristic sense of pursuing a feeling over long stretches of time, that makes it a convincing and powerful document of grief. Towards the beginning of the poem, which is the record of Tennyson's mourning for Arthur Hallam, we find the poet outside his friend's door:

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

This is a perfect, enclosed moment of grief. But it gains in poignancy, and even in fidelity to life, when we come to its companion-piece, more than a hundred poems later:

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, not as one that weeps
I come once more; the city sleeps;
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see
Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
A light-blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
And bright the friendship of thine eye;
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand.

A long work of mourning separates the early poem, with its choked last line, from the late poem, in which the poet is at last reconciled to loss. The "doors where my heart was used to beat" are the same, but the mourner is transfigured: once "waiting for a hand/A hand that can be clasped no more," he now is able—but, with a necessary concession to reality, only "in my thoughts"—to "take the pressure of thine hand." The subtlety of the correspondences, and the length traveled between them, gives the second poem the quality of hard-earned consolation, not easy and arbitrary uplift. Here, alone in Tennyson's poetry, is the delicacy of feeling that we

find in the very finest poets.

Indeed, what is remarkable about "In Memoriam" is the way that the pressure of authentic feeling provides a check to those powers that, in Tennyson's other poems, often run wild. Melancholy in his songs from "The Princess"—

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn fields
And thinking of the days that are no more.

—is entirely different from sorrow in "In Memoriam":

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
Let darkness keep her raven gloss:
Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
The long result of love, and boast,
"Behold the man who loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn."

In the first, there is a wonderful movement, artful repetitions, and the last line's falling, wistful cadence; but there is also arbitrariness, as when despair is simply announced as "divine," and formula, the "happy Autumn fields." In the second, there is still sonority and a slight gilding—darkness is not just dark, it has "raven gloss"—but these are checked by an intense feeling that is not just to be sampled, tasted: it must be clasped to avoid drowning, it must beat the ground. Above all, there is the form, which Tennyson maintains through the whole poem, and which is perfectly suited to the matter: tetrameter, not pentameter, and so forced to approach song rather than speech, lament rather than mere complaint; and the ABBA stanza, which allows no forward motion, no conclusive couplet, but always circles back on itself, just like the poet's grief.

EVEN MORE SURPRISING is that "In Memoriam" drives Tennyson on to a kind of mental agility, a surprising development of ideas, that is not to be found in the rest of his poetry. There is no poem in Karlin's anthology—there can be few in all of English poetry—that excels this lyric from "In Memoriam" in imaginative surprise and emotional truth:

If one should bring me this report,
That thou hadst touch'd the land to-day,
And I went down unto the quay,
And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,
Should see thy passengers in rank
Come stepping lightly down the plank,
And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come
The man I held as half-divine;
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,
And how my life had droop'd of late,
And he should sorrow o'er my state
And marvel what possessed my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,
No hint of death in all his frame,
But found him all in all the same,
I should not feel it to be strange.

It is the last line which transforms the poem from a consoling fantasy into something with the surprise of actual experience. Tennyson has come upon himself in the midst of his own delusion. He is both the illusioned mourner and the disillusioned observer.

TENNYSON IS THROWN beyond himself in this poem; it is the only place that he attains the greatness of his gifts. And he does so because he turns inward—but not in the conventional Victorian way, which is a way of substituting pliable thought and dream for hard reality. This is the bad-Victorian use of poetry that we find Virginia Woolf mocking in *To the Lighthouse*, when Mr. Ramsay stumbles upon Lily and William as he paces the garden reciting "The Charge of the Light Brigade":

"Some one had blundered."

Mr. Ramsay glared at them. He glared at them without seeming to see them. That did make them both vaguely uncomfortable. Together they had seen a thing they had not been meant to see. They had encroached upon a privacy.

The shameful privacy of poetry is that which creates a false world, for the reader and for the writer; when an outsider's sharper vision pierces that world, it collapses into childish fragments. And Tennyson is often an escapist poet of this kind, using rhythm and gorgeous rhetoric to create a hermetically sealed dream world. In "In Memoriam," however, he turns a cooler and more penetrating eye onto his own heart, and he reports what he finds there accurately.

This is the rigor that is shared by Barrett Browning, Meredith, Arnold, and Hardy, and that is no less characteristically Victorian than its opposite. It is the achieved inheritance of Wordsworth, as

opposed to the sentimental egoism and the idle Nature-worship that the Victorians also took from him (and that the later Wordsworth gave them). It is the fruit of Wordsworth's new and intensely psychological conception of poetry. Indeed, while Wordsworth is usually associated with the romance of Nature and its beneficent powers, Nature is only incidental to his real innovation, which is the anatomy of consciousness—in his own case, a consciousness for which Nature happened to loom decisively large.

IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY, inner turmoil is usually brought to a calm resolution; and it is the sometimes too-easy accomplishment of this resolution that can make him seem merely complacent. But the idea that poetry should be an honest introspection of turmoil is taken over by George Meredith, in "Modern Love," with entirely different results. "Modern Love" is a sequence of fifty modified sonnets, chronicling a complicated set of infidelities among the poet, his wife, and his mistress. What most strikes a contemporary reader is the sheer nakedness of Meredith's emotion, his admission of the worst instincts and motives. John Berryman is not more self-lacerating.

The sonnet form—extended by two lines, into a set of four quatrains with no concluding, resolving couplet—allows Meredith to play the decorous restraint of form against the explosions of feeling, with startling results. In the ninth sonnet, the poet has already learned of his wife's infidelity, and struggles to restrain his hostility:

He felt the wild beast in him
betweenwhiles
So masterfully rude, that he would grieve
To see the helpless delicate thing receive
His guardianship through certain dark
defiles.
Had he not teeth to rend,
and hunger too?
But he still he spared her. Once:
"Have you no fear?"
He said: 'twas dusk; she in his grasp;
none near.
She laughed: "No, surely; am I not with
you?"
And uttering that soft starry "you,"
she leaned
Her gentle body near him, looking up;
And from her eyes, as from a poison-cup,
He drank until the fluttering eyelids
screened.
Devilish malignant witch! and oh,
young beam
Of heaven's circle-glory! Here thy shape
To squeeze like an intoxicating grape—
I might, and yet thou goest safe,
supreme.

This poem is not free from Victorian falsefinesses—the poison-cup, the "Devilish malignant witch!"—but what is honest and true in it is far more salient. The divided consciousness that threatens the wife and "grieves" to see her threatened; the wavering between the desire to do violence and the desire for sex—captured in the shift in meaning through the line "Had he not teeth to rend, and hunger too?"; the self-contempt of the non-violent man: all these are so true, so faithfully recorded, that they are simultaneously shocking and natural.

"MODERN LOVE" is not flawless, and it is clearly the work of a less skilled poet than Tennyson, but it is one of the great works of the nineteenth century, at least for the purposes of the twentieth century. Its motto could be the last lines of Sonnet 25: "My dear, these things are life:/And life, some think, is worthy of the Muse." To realize that this was written more than a hundred years before Robert Lowell's celebrated motto for confessional poetry—"Yet why not say what happened?"—is to puncture our own conceit, and to alter our view of the Victorians.

The darker reaches of human experience are not a discovery of the post-World War II generation, nor is their frank enunciation a new poetic technique. Today, a poet writing about a situation similar to Meredith's might include proper names and local details—as Lowell did in *The Dolphin*, a similar sonnet sequence—instead of calling his wife and mistress "Madam" and "My Lady," like Meredith; but it is by no means certain that this greater specificity would lead to greater accuracy. "Modern Love" demonstrates the balance of the contingent and the universal that is necessary to make poetry interesting to a wide audience over a long period of time.

Similar observations could be made about Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese," which makes clear that "depression" is not just a malady of our own day; and virtually all of Arnold's lyric poetry (though Karlin gives us too little of it, and wastes space instead on "The Sick King at Bokhara," one of Arnold's failed Eastern tales); and Hardy's quietly despairing poems; and Housman's clarified, classical lyrics. Even Hopkins falls into this tradition, though one might not suspect it from the poems that Karlin includes. In keeping with his taste for the outlandish, he gives us Hopkins's alliteration-orgies, "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" and "That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire," but only one of the "terrible" sonnets. There is the Hopkins who wrote:

Glory be to God for dappled things,
For skies of couple-color as a brindled
cow,
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout
that swim,
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches'
wings;
Landscape plotted and pierced—fold,
fallow, and plow,
And all trades, their gear, tackle and trim.

And there is the Hopkins who wrote:

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most
deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste
was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood
brimmed the curse.
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge
to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves;
but worse.

By including the former but not the latter, Karlin unbalances our view of this poet, making him seem at once more innovative (with his sprung rhythm and Anglo-Saxon alliteration) and more traditional (with his delighted prettiness) than he really is.

KARLIN'S INTRODUCTION MAKES the point that "we should think, not of Victorian poetry, but of Victorian poetries." This sounds like contemporary academic boilerplate, but it contains an important truth. It is not that "Victorian poetry" contains more kinds of badness than we suspect—that it means political doggerel and parlor poetasting as well as Tennysonian banality. It is, rather, another way of stating the timeless truth that the past is always waiting to be made alive in new ways, that Victorian poetry can be made to serve contemporary poetry as an ally rather than as a foil.

If there is a characteristic fault of twentieth-century poetry, it is the idea that rhetorical violence is always an effective way of communicating psychological violence; that, by beating the surface of poetry, one gives the impression of deep currents at work underneath. Hiding within *The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse* is a slimmer and urgently useful anthology, which can teach an opposite lesson: that difficult matter is best expressed in regular form, that the pressure of emotion requires a pressure of artifice, and that in this fruitful contest there is more of both truth and beauty than in the sincere chaos of most contemporary poetry. Read in this way, the Victorian age is not an infancy that we have outgrown, but a maturity that we have yet to attain. ■

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Fall Ball

IT'S A DREARY OCTOBER SATURDAY, and the Swarthmore College football team is well on its way to losing for the thirty-second time in 33 games. It seems hard to imagine that five weeks ago Swarthmore football was considered a big deal. That was when Swarthmore actually won a game, routing Oberlin 42-6 to end what had been a 28-game losing streak, then the longest in the nation. At the end of the game, students rushed the field and tore down one of the goalposts. *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *The New York Times* all ran articles on Swarthmore's triumph. "This is the happiest day of my life," the Swarthmore coach told his players. But the celebratory mood didn't last long, as the team quickly returned to past form. Swarthmore lost its next three games by a combined score of 151-11. And today, as the game drags into the final quarter, Swarthmore trails the Muhlenberg Mules 35-0, and Muhlenberg, with the ball inside the Swarthmore ten-yard line, is threatening to score again. But then something unlikely happens: the Swarthmore defense holds the Mules, forcing them to attempt a field goal, which they miss. With that, the Swarthmore crowd lets out its biggest cheer of the day.

TUCKER ZENGERLE, MY YOUNGER brother, plays linebacker for the Swarthmore Garnet Tide. He's a senior, and, until the Oberlin game a few weeks ago, he had never won a college football game. (Thank goodness he also plays lacrosse for Swarthmore; in three seasons he's won five games in that sport.) Two years ago things were so bad that Tucker was averaging more than 15 tackles per game. I say "bad" because, while the stat was impressive, it seemed (to me, at least) that if Tucker didn't tackle the opposing player, then the other team scored a touchdown. And with *only* 15 tackles per game, Swarthmore's opponents scored a lot of touchdowns.

I GRADUATED FROM SWARTHMORE IN 1996. During my four years there, I probably attended four or five football games, usually because the stands offered a nice, quiet—yes, quiet—place other than the

library to study on a fall afternoon. I can't say I ever paid much attention to the games. Similarly, I'm not sure my parents even knew Swarthmore had a football team until its coach recruited my brother while he was in high school. But now, needless to say, we have more than a passing interest in Swarthmore football. If I can't make it to a game, I'm on the Web Saturday afternoon trolling around the netherworld of small-college football scores, trying to find the result so that I'll have a better sense of what Tucker's mood will be when I call. If they've held the other side to under 40 points, he'll be consolable. Over 40, he's usually despondent. I don't quite know how he'd act after a close loss—he has yet to experience one.

MY PARENTS PUT ME TO SHAME WITH their efforts. They make the two-hour drive from Washington, D.C., to Swarthmore for almost every home game. They'll trek more than two hours for many of Tucker's away games, too. And, when they're at the games, they tend to make their presence felt. My mother sits in the stands and yells, "That's my son!" whenever Tucker makes a good play. Once I even heard her tell off an opposing fan for mocking the Swarthmore team. My father, meanwhile, paces the sidelines, shouting encouragement to the team no matter how lopsided the score. Two years ago, Swarthmore was getting creamed by Johns Hopkins 73-0, and the Garnet Tide were simply running out the clock. But my dad was still cheering, even as the Swarthmore quarterback took the snap from center and put his knee to the ground. "Come on, guys!" my dad yelled. "It's all right!" Little wonder that, at the end of that season, the team presented him with a special "most dedicated fan" award.

AROUND THE SAME TIME MY FATHER was being recognized with this honor, the college was facing a decision. Swarthmore could cut its losses and abandon its football program, as its main athletic rival, Haverford College, had done in 1971 and as at least 22 other colleges and universities have done in the 1990s. Or it could recommit itself to fielding a football team that might not win any championships but would at least be competitive. Swarthmore chose to do the latter. First, it removed its coach—a dramatic and rather difficult move, considering the coach was a tenured faculty member. Then, it hired a new coach, a young, enthusiastic assistant from the University of Chicago named Peter Alvanos. And then it gave Alvanos the resources he'll need to turn the football program around, such as a bigger budget for a larger coaching staff and new uniforms and equipment. But, perhaps

more importantly, there is now an understanding in the college's admissions office that a competitive football team needs about 60 players—not the 90 players many of Swarthmore's opponents have, but not an insubstantial number, either, when you consider that Swarthmore's male student body numbers only about 650. That understanding, of course, means that, while the college hasn't exactly compromised its admissions standards, not every football recruit needs to achieve Swarthmore's median SAT score of 1440 to get in; a 1300 might do the trick now.

THE COLLEGE'S EFFORTS TO RE-invigorate the football program have not been without controversy or dissent on campus. A number of students and even some faculty members have spoken out against the move. Football has never been popular at Swarthmore; the violent nature of the sport ruffles feathers at a school with a Quaker history. So some people would have been just as happy to see the program expire. But, for a college so exquisitely sensitive to diversity, the decision to maintain a football team makes a certain amount of sense. For one thing, many at the school tend to look down on any pursuits that aren't completely intellectual; the presence of a football team checks this tendency. Equally important, a number of football players come from more conservative, working-class backgrounds than the average Swarthmore student's. At a school that's decidedly liberal—during my senior year, those who favored flying the American flag over the administration building were deemed to be conservatives—that's a kind of diversity that's sorely needed.

AFTER THE GAME ON SATURDAY, though, as I walk onto the field to commiserate with my brother, it's easy to lose sight of these high-minded rationales. Tucker is covered in mud, and he's cradling his left hand, which he injured two years ago and which has still not fully healed. But, for the most part, he is able to put things in perspective. Thirty-five to zero, the final score of the Muhlenberg game, isn't that bad, he reasons—at least when you compare it to some of Swarthmore's past defeats. Besides, he says, the rest of the schedule has a few teams that Swarthmore can beat. I ask him if he'll be glad when the season, and his football career, are over. He looks at me as if I were crazy. "No," he says. "I don't know what I'll do with my Saturday afternoons." In a strange way, neither does the rest of the family.

JASON ZENGERLE

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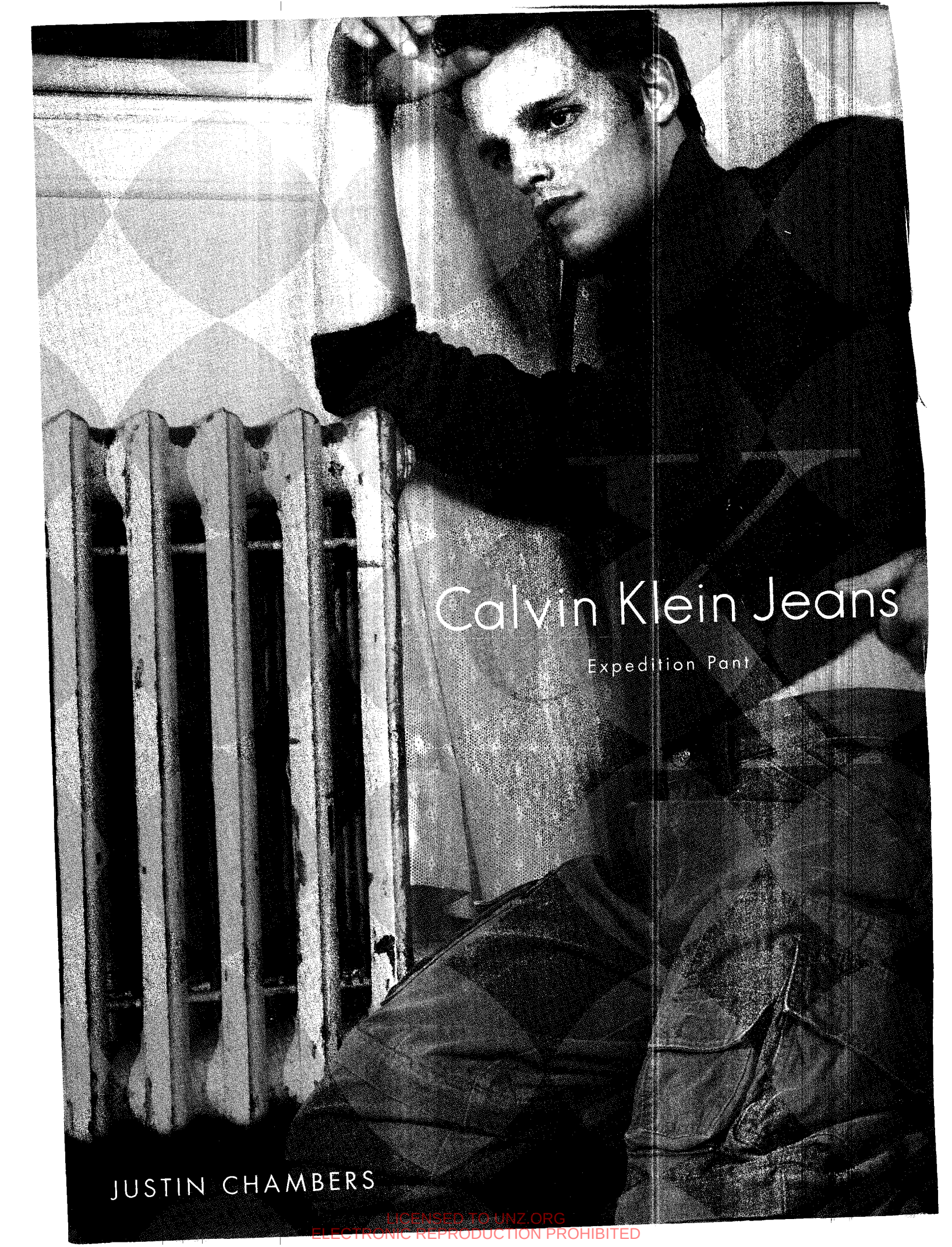
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